



ACQUIRING TALENT IN A DUNGEON

BOOK 01

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Acquiring Talent in a Dungeon

(던전에서 재능얻기)

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Synopsis

Talent, appearance, power.

No matter how hard I try, I can't beat the people born with these things.

But, within this dungeon, I can overcome them.

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Prologue

Someone once proclaimed the truth of life: “Property and status aren’t important. For those who are faithful to reality, happiness will come naturally.” But, was that really true? I didn’t know who said it, but their way of thinking was way too arrogant. They were looking down on the existence of human beings.

Everyone wanted to become richer.

Everyone wanted to become more influential.

Everyone wanted to build up their power until the end.

Fly higher. Become better. They wanted to be more special!

Not just ‘men’ but ‘humans’ were born with desire, a dream.

But, no matter how they reached for their dreams, they couldn’t touch them. Money, family, problems of natural talent or social limitations all stopped them. Everyone succumbed to reality as their desires were trampled on.

Happiness didn’t follow people who were faithful to reality. They just learned how to suppress their desires and dreams. They deceived themselves. This was reality. Even those who were happy dreamt endlessly. They dreamt of becoming professional athletes, famous singers or actors in a virtual drama.

The freedom to feel desire was given to everyone, but it was unfortunate for some. The number of people likely to abandon reality rose. Perhaps it was their salvation.

Maybe it was the mercy of the gods looking down on Earth for entertainment.

That night at midnight. A hole opened in front of those filled with desire.

Chapter 1 - Day 1, Entering The Dungeon

The group presentation was successful. It didn't feel that great, but it was a neat result with no specific problems. The demanding professor also complimented us.

"Somehow, I feel good!" A student pretended to be drunk on the sense of accomplishment, when in reality they had been missing for half the meetings. He used the excuse of 'something came up' every time, but when I looked at his public SNS account, he had gone out to play.

"Everybody worked hard, this is the result of your hard work!" The student wearing a baseball cap over his shaved hair imitated the leader.

The reason he could act so shamelessly was because he had made a huge difference. He knew there was a large gap. He didn't want to be associated as a pleb and instead styled himself as a prince. As soon as he started investigating, he became a professional in materials research.

"I honestly was a little concerned... As a result, I'm glad we finished well."

Ah. Yes, you should have been worried.

This jerk was formidable. He was a guy who advertised 'I am a cool person' with his words and actions.

But no matter how I looked, he was just a person with a ‘cool sickness.’ (Korean slang for someone who thinks they’re really cool but they’re not). His powerpoint writing skills were only at the level of a second year middle school student. No matter how much he was asked to modify the powerpoint, he just ignored them with an expression like he was chewing on poo.

It wouldn’t be unusual if he became a thug.

This was the first time I had worked with him, but there was no sense in telling the professor about the problem. People who started a conflict by saying ‘You’re wrong!’ would receive a penalty. In the case of X, it was inevitable.

Anyway, I needed to perform well in front of the professor because my scholarship depended on this semester’s score. Being too emotional would just cause collateral damage. Thus, I didn’t do anything.

“Shall we go eat to celebrate? How about dinner?”

“Okay.”

“Me too!”

“I’ll pass. I have private tutoring.”

The three people stared blankly at me.

“Really? Then it can't be helped...”

“It's too bad.”

It felt like they were glaring daggers at my back as I waved my hand and turned away. I didn't think I could impersonate a genius. I was just tired and ready to go sleep.

I lived a very hard life. I used everything that was available to me.

My family wasn't one that could be called poor. They had high expectations for their only son, but they couldn't afford the tuition of a first-rate private school.

Rather than taking my parent's suggestion of a 100% funded scholarship, I desperately sought alternatives.

The Ward Welfare Division. I searched various student foundations and entrance screening tests to find all the low-income assistance methods possible.

I asked a few high school juniors for examples of the college entrance exams and went to private tutoring during the winter break.

I managed to solve the admission fee and the cost of moving to Seoul. Of course, it was a strenuous achievement. I put in the effort to be as prepared as possible.

Not only did I get support for a low-income household, I also received a scholarship based on my grades and recommendations from teachers.

I also cared about human relationships, so I have a good relationship with most people. I networked as much as possible with seniors who had already graduated from computer engineering and found a part time job whenever there was a break.

When taking into consideration my age and family, I was very excellent in the group bracket I was in. I put aside my pride and used it as a driving force.

Buuuong!

“...”

As I waited at the school bus stop to go home, a foreign car passed by me.

It was a stranger but I could see his face. He was around the same age as me, maybe a bit younger, possibly 20 years old.

I wasn't envious. It was just frustrating. I had seen so often it in recent years.

The talent of money, the so called ‘wall’ that I couldn’t cross.

I stayed up all night with a few cups of coffee to solve algorithm problems with a few friends. I became more efficient.

I had friends who went out and earned a lot of money for the first 10 years after graduation and then returned home rich. I wanted to be like them. No, I wanted to surpass them.

Was that too greedy? Shouldn’t I concentrate on the present and focus on my current life?

Clink.

As soon as I opened the door, I threw myself onto the bed. Today, there was no such thing as private tutoring. I just wanted to take a break. These days, it was difficult to endure the exhaustion I felt all the time. I closed my eyes.

It was midnight when I opened them again.

I rubbed my eyes and sat up. The clock on the wall showed that it was precisely midnight. However, I felt like I’d slept pretty well. I got up to go to the bathroom.

The moment that I took a step, I faltered. There was nothing for my feet to touch on the ground.

"Eek?"

I staggered and barely managed to throw myself back on the bed.

There was a hole in my floor.

It was rectangular and approximately 2 metres in length, but it wasn't just an opening. There was a stone border and stone stairs leading down.

"..."

I stared at the floor for a while but the hole remained the same.

My next thought was that I should leave the house. However...

"W-what is this?"

I'd made my way to the front door, but it wouldn't budge. The handle was stuck as though it had been glued in place. My remaining drowsiness disappeared as goose bumps formed.

I opened my phone to request help.

[The call is currently not available in this area...]

There was just a voice message stating I was out of range.

I re-entered my room to try and open the window. Just like the door, it didn't move at all.

I desperately opened my mobile phone again but belatedly realized something that only raised my fear.

12:00

A few minutes had certainly passed since I woke to the hole. The clock on the wall was the same, the hour/minute/second hands were fixed at 12, not moving.

Was this a nightmare? My senses told me that wasn't the answer. Even if this was a vivid dream, it gave off the feeling of reality. If this was a dream then I wouldn't even be thinking about it.

[Lie down in bed or step on the stairs.]

“Uhat!?”

I automatically swung a fist as letters appeared in front of my eyes, but my fist didn't touch anything.

The letters were still floating in the air. That was all it said. I wondered if something else would pop out, but the words just stayed floating there.

Then I thought about the meaning of the words. Lie down in my bed? My head naturally turned and looked at the bed.

Then more letters showed up.

[As soon as you lie down, you will fall into a sleepy state. The hole will disappear. All your memories about the hole will be gone in the morning. The end.]

I wasn't as surprised as the first time. Instead, after carefully reading the letters, I turned and stared at the hole.

I had seen letters above the bed. So it was only logical more might come up if I looked at the hole. I was correct.

[Day 1 of exploration will begin. It isn't possible to leave the dungeon before the exploration of the 1st floor is completed or before you are eliminated.]

Dungeon? It was a word I had heard before. A word I knew from games and manhwa.

But if the words were true, why wouldn't I lie down on my bed? I had no intention of stepping on the staircase. Not without knowing what was down there...

[An opportunity.]

What?

New words surfaced like they were answering my subconscious thoughts. That wasn't the end.

[Explorer - Kim Hee-chul's desire, this is a means to pursue the desires that can't be achieved normally.]

“...”

If I was normal then I wouldn't step on the unknown staircase.

But was it due to what I had been thinking recently? Was it because of the uncontrollable fatigue that reached its peak today?

Whatever the reason, I took the words seriously.

And I took a step.

[Explorer - Kim Hee-chul. Enter.]

[Opening the dungeon's 1st floor.]

The words surfaced in front of my eyes.

At the same time, something appeared over my head.

“What is this?”

At first glance, it was a red fluorescent light. A square bar of red light. Wait a minute.

Red bar? Above my head? I had seen this before... Perhaps...

Letters appeared in front of the bar.

[HP Bar. Displays the current health of the explorer.]

[Current Balance: 121/121]



Chapter 2 - Day 1, 1st Floor

“...”

A real game?

[Once it reaches 0, you are automatically out.]

“What is ‘out’?” I muttered to myself but the letters didn’t appear with an answer.

Either way, I didn’t intend to walk down the stairs barehanded. I picked up a knife near the sink, but when I tried to bring it down the stairs with me...

Swish.

As soon as I stepped back on the stairs, the knife flew out of my hands.

[You can’t carry in items that aren’t in your inventory. Everyday things that the explorer carries such as clothing, jewellery, etc, are accepted.]

I understood. Okay. Then what about my phone? I wouldn’t be able to make any calls but the light would be helpful. I swallowed

my fears and headed down the stairs.

I had been worried about falling, but it was baseless. After the third step, my vision became dark and the next moment, I was at the bottom of the stairs.

[1st floor. Arrived.]

A cave appeared in front of me. It had stalactites like the ones commonly seen in nature documentaries. However, the tunnel had a regular width.

I looked back at the stairs with surprise as I wondered how much I had skipped. There was no end to the stairs leading upwards.

[You are not allowed to step on the stairs again. If your feet touch the stairs, you are out.]

"Okay, I understand."

I shrugged, but half of it was bravado. Then I started walking in the direction of the cave.

Before I walked a hundred steps, I noticed something strange: there was no light in the cave. In fact, it was complete darkness.

However, I was able to identity what was in front of me.

Four metres? Or five metres?

A certain range around me was illuminated, like a spotlight was focused on me. Once I moved my foot, the part I stepped to brightened accordingly.

The boundary between the bright area and the dark part seemed to be drawn with a ruler. I was staring at it when more words appeared.

[Current floor visibility is normal. Field of Vision: 4.5m]

[This can be expanded with a related talent or object.]

Was this the concept of ‘vision’? The fact that I couldn’t see more than a few metres in front of me was quite burdensome.

There was a fork in the road. I’d come to a cross shaped crossroad with three directions: ‘straight’, ‘left’ or ‘right’.

“... This is bad.”

This was a ‘dungeon’ and it would be a problem if the structure was a maze. The key was the limited field of vision. If everything

was visible then it wouldn't be difficult to return to this crossroad again.

The stairs that I had come down were still visible in the distance. However, it was likely to be very confusing if I could only see a few metres around me.

I pulled out my cell phone. I hadn't been thinking about making a map in my head. People weren't smart and precise creatures. There was a bit of uncertainty, so I wanted to have as few regrets as possible. I hadn't lived long, but it was a lesson I'd had deeply ingrained into my mind.

Phone calls didn't work but the touchpad app was fine. I recorded the brief directions with my finger. Then...

[Talent has been acquired.]

[Talent - Cartography: Ability to create and read maps according to the rank, spatial perception ability and descriptive power. Memory and visualization abilities have slightly increased.]

[Currently it is LV 1. Benefits will open at LV 5.]

Talent acquisition? It was distinctly different from the meaning of 'talent' that I knew...

[It is possible to open talents through specific acts and experience in the dungeon. Repeating it will give experience and cause the rank to rise.]

[The talent acquired here will also be applied in reality. The innate and acquired qualities that the explorer is born with will be forcibly changed.]

The words disappeared and small letters floated above the hand holding his phone.

[Cartography LV 1. 2/100]

This was probably... I turned right at the intersection and added it to the map. The change came immediately.

[Cartography LV 1. 4/100]

No matter how busy, I was still a teenager who lived in South Korea in the 21st century. The leisure activities that I enjoyed were playing soccer and video games.

I guessed that the ‘4/100’ was experience. It was the experience required for LV 2, and at LV 2, the talent would grow like the words said.

The ability to read and draw maps. Spatial perception. Descriptive ability. And a little bit of memory and visualization. I could feel it already.

My overall dexterity was bad. Drawing a line on a piece of paper would make it crooked, let alone doing it on a cell phone. But it was different now. The line was noticeably neater compared to before the words had appeared. There was almost no shaking in the strokes.

"Wow."

A sound of admiration popped out. This was the ‘Cartography’ talent? Drawing a line on my cell phone wasn’t that important. It was just important that I could feel a change.

There was nothing particularly good about drawing a map. Spatial perception and descriptive ability, I couldn’t feel any change right now. However, it was a different story for memory and visualization, even with the ‘slightly’ attached to it.

My heart jumped-- the changes were permanent. A change in ability that was meaningful enough for me to notice. Besides, this was just the effect of level ‘1’!

I'd walked a few steps and it was already 4/100. It didn't seem like it would be very difficult to fill up the remaining 96 points. I continued to add to the map on the screen as I walked.

8/100, 15/100, 24/100...

The map was useful. I encountered a few dead ends as well as the overlapping intersections several times. But I never got lost.

Even though I had the map, it was confusing whether or not what I was seeing matched with the map. However, I stayed calm and made the right judgements. This was probably due to the increased spatial perception ability.

[The level of a talent has risen.]

[Cartography LV 1 -> LV 2. Related abilities have increased.]

[Cartography LV 2. 2/200.]

“Hya.”

There was a feeling of accomplishment.

I checked the map that I had drawn so far. The structure of the cave was indeed a maze. Overall, it had a rectangular shape and

there was one part that I hadn't visited yet.

I had a thought as I headed there. Something was strange. Maze. Dungeon. If so, then something should emerge, whether it was a monster or a treasure box. In fact, I was hoping for the latter.

If I left the maze without finding anything...

"Eh?"

As soon as I had that thought I reached the last part of the maze. It was a dead end with a staircase leading down. The stairway underneath the square hole looked like the one in my room.

In front of it was a square box.

[Wooden Box. There seems to be no lock. It is possible to smash it.]

It said the box could be smashed.

Then letters appeared above the stairs behind the box.

[Stairs. It leads to the 2nd floor.]

[The moment you step foot on it, the current floor exploration is over and you will return from the dungeon. The next night at midnight, you will start on the floor at the bottom of the stairs.]

So, it was fixed to one floor per day, but the real point was the next words.

[Changes in the following floor: Dungeon space has expanded. You can encounter +1 explorer. Monsters below E rank will emerge.]

Monsters... I trembled at that word but the part before it was more surprising. It meant that I could encounter another explorer like me. If that was the case, did the next floor require some type of cooperative play? Or was it a competition?

"..."

I stopped thinking about it. They weren't directly in front of me and I had an object to focus on: the box.

Gulp. I gulped and pushed open the top of the box. The interior of the box was dark. It was a completely black void that showed nothing.

I put my hand inside the box. In many ways, it was a rash choice.

Ching.

There was a sound as a mechanism was activated. I felt a cool sensation at my waist. Pain.

“...Eh?”

My wrist had been neatly cut off by the top part of the box.

“Ah, waaaaahhhh!”

A huge pain overwhelmed me and I fell down on my butt. I looked up at my ‘HP Bar’ and saw that it had been reduced by 1/4.

[Current Balance: 96/121]

[A bleeding state. Health will decrease by 2 every minute.]

Pain was followed by fear. I lost my hand. The fear of living the rest of my life as a disabled person steamrolled through my mind. I couldn’t believe it as I looked down at the bloody stump of my arm. It was a surreal sight as letters rose above the blood.

[Common wounds suffered in the dungeon will be cured by

clearing the floor.]

In other words, my hand would return to normal if I headed down the stairs? I felt relieved and immediately stepped towards the stairs. I wanted to escape. The pain of my body being cut was real. I didn't want to feel like this for one more minute...!

...But.

I stopped right in front of the stairs. My body was telling me to go down. Don't hesitate to go down quickly, but at the same time, my head was speaking.

It was strange. The box was three steps away from the stairs. Don't think about it, go down straight away! No. Think about it.

Wouldn't the trap be useless if they placed it three steps before the stairs? It was like it was trying send me a message 'Pain? Then quickly go down, down!'

There must be something. If I didn't go down then something would happen. I thought about earlier. The moment that I received Cartography. I once again looked at my HP Bar.

[Current Balance: 94/121]

[A bleeding state. Health will decrease by 2 every minute.]

People wouldn't die just from having their wrist cut off. I stepped back from the stairs. Instead, I grabbed my cut off wrist and leaned against a cave wall.

Kaduk.

I gritted my teeth. I was familiar with enduring things. The few things I've gained in life had been through struggling. Then letters appeared in front of my eyes.

[Talent has been acquired.]

Chapter 3 - Day 1, 1st Floor Completion

Did I say I was familiar with it? I was more familiar with being betrayed by patience. Life wasn't a neat give and take. However, it wasn't the case this time.

[Talent - Pain Tolerance: The ability to endure pain will depend on the level. Willpower, concentration and mental resistance will slightly increase.]

[Currently it is LV 1. Benefits will open at LV 5.]

“It is great to see.”

I could feel the sweat running down my face, but I smiled as I saw the words. Patience, willpower and concentration. It was gratifying to see these friends. Mental resistance was slightly weaker.

[Use the command prompt ‘check talent’ to show the list of talents that you currently possess.]

[Use the command prompt ‘check ability’ to show the current capabilities of your abilities.]

"Check talent." Then the words 'Cartography' and 'Pain Tolerance' appeared. Next. "Check ability."

To be honest, I was anticipating it a little bit. It was a numerical measure of my abilities, usually called stats in games. I could check my ability level through objective metrics. How much would my own abilities be? Anyone would want to see it at least once.

[Endurance: 11 (Decimal points are omitted)]

[Willpower: 11 (Decimal points are omitted)]

...Eung?

"Check ability."

[Endurance: 11 (Decimal points are omitted)]

[Willpower: 11 (Decimal points are omitted)]

Why were there only two?

[The number of human abilities capable of being represented

is almost infinite.]

[For the above reason, the abilities that have a value of 10 or less are omitted.]

It meant that the only abilities that exceeded 10 was endurance and willpower. “10... What degree of ability is 10?” I received an answer.

[For the current human race, the adult standard of abilities is between 6-10.]

[Abilities increase in small quantities of units below a decimal point. A change to the left of the decimal place is rarely observed outside the dungeon. This is referred to as ‘breaking through the limits.]

“Ha.”

I couldn’t help laughing. I had been a little bit confident.

I struggled alone in an unfamiliar environment, entered a good university and was able to achieve my own results. Frankly, it would be a lie if I said I wasn’t complacent. I’m obviously not a genius.

But I still thought I was a little more special than ordinary people. I had thought like that. "Special. Hah, how ridiculous."

If this had been a normal situation then the mental blow might have been worse. No, I wouldn't have even known this fact if these were normal circumstances. But now I was here. Talent. This strange dungeon would give me access to what I didn't have before.

If I didn't have it, then I could get it.

Kuk.

I put strength into the hand holding my bleeding wrist. Endurance and willpower. Those were my two advantages. Yes. I could look at it in another manner: I could put my hands on everything.

I stared at the section of wrist that was cut off.

[Pain Tolerance. LV 1. 39/100]

The pain hadn't disappeared. Rather, it seemed to be getting worse than before. However, the feeling returned to other parts of my body. If you were hit hard in the stomach, you couldn't think about anything else and other parts of your body couldn't move properly.

That was before I received Pain Tolerance.

Now, I still suffered the pain but their sensations in the other parts of my body were different. My body seemed to be able to move more easily than usual. The shaking had also stopped to a certain extent. This was how I was able to think about raising my stats.

[Pain Tolerance. LV 1. 51/100]

Maybe I went crazy due to the pain. Only a short time had passed, yet the rise in ability was enormous. My HP Bar was almost unchanged. It seemed like the bleeding wasn't as severe as I thought.

'There is no feeling of death.' Then I can endure. I can withstand it.

[The level of a talent has risen.]

[Pain Tolerance LV 1 -> LV 2. Related abilities have increased.]

That's right.

[Concentration limit exceeded.]

[Concentration: 11 (Decimal points are omitted)]

Concentration? The increase in ability indicated that it was just a little bit below the decimal point. Moreover, the concentration increase from Pain Tolerance levelling up had the label ‘slightly’ attached.

Then my original concentration must’ve been around 10 or so. Maybe the decimal point was 10.99... Well, either way it was in the late 10’s.

"Yes, let's just focus on it."

I still had 86 health remaining. Level two required 100 points while level 3 needed 200. I had that thought and opened my eyes.

[Pain Tolerance. LV 2. 14/200]

Wasn’t it rising more slowly than before?

It might be due to the level up. But I didn’t feel like Cartography became slower after reaching level two. The limit had been raised from 100 to 200 so it wasn’t right that the rate should reduced.

Perhaps... Although it had been very painful awhile ago, I had now grown accustomed to the sensation. Did the experience slow down because the pain I felt was lessened? I looked up at the HP Bar. My HP was still reducing at a rate of two points per minute.

"..."

The solution was clear. I just didn't know if I could put it into action. I raised my body, standing slowly.

I turned and faced the wall that I had been leaning against. I took one step back with my left foot, while my right foot was half a step forward.

I lifted both arms, well one healthy hand holding a wrist with no hand. My shoulders were in the proper position and I prepared to throw a punch. Ah. My cut wrist couldn't form a fist. Truly.

"... Hah."

Anyone who heard it would be terrified. I honestly admitted it. Yes. I was completely ruined. Were my legs shaking? This was the craziest thing I would ever do. That time when I rode my dad's bike up a high hill and closed my eyes as I went down? Well. I didn't think it was so crazy now.

I laughed and punched the wall.

“Ack!”

I briefly lost consciousness.

[Pain Tolerance. LV 4. 792/800]

“Yes... Eu... Ai... g...”

My mouth could barely form sounds. I used every last strength to raise my head.

I was stretched out on the ground. When I looked up, my HP Bar was almost empty.

[Current Balance: 5/121]

[A bleeding state. Health will decrease by 2 every minute.]

I had less than three minutes left.

It was dangerous. I had to go down the stairs. There was no strength in my legs. My belly was damp. Blood? It was the smell of

urine. There was also a lot of it. I gritted my teeth and turned over. I could see both arms in front of me as I crawled.

Let's say there was a tree branch. If it was cut with a knife then the section was very neat.

Then it was given to an active child. The child played with it, used it to draw pictures in the sand and took it to a playground. It was used to kill some ants, maybe a few earthworms or mantises as well.

Now, think about that cut section again. The end of my right arm looked similar. There was no sensation anymore. That's why I stopped gaining experience. How many times had I hit the wall? I remembered exactly two times.

No. I didn't want to think about it.

I didn't want to think about it.

I hated thinking about it.

I wouldn't think about it.

Go to the stairs quickly. I used the cut off section of my wrist as a cane and crawled forward slowly. This way was faster. I didn't have any sensations anyway.

[Current Balance: 4/121]

[A bleeding state. Health will decrease by 2 every minute.]

As I moved forward little by little, I seemed like a bug. A bug with no wings or legs. What would it do in the future? What was I talking about? My hand would grow again.

[Current Balance: 3/121]

[A bleeding state. Health will decrease by 2 every minute.]

Really? Yes.

[Current Balance: 2/121]

[A bleeding state. Health will decrease by 2 every minute.]

What did someone tell me? I didn't know. I couldn't remember. Mother. Why don't we have any money?

[Current Balance: 1/121]

[A bleeding state. Health will decrease by 2 every minute.]

My arm didn't touch the ground, but the air. My upper body tilted forward and I rolled down the stairs.

[1st floor cleared.]

[Unique talent has awakened.]

The first thing I did when I opened my eyes was to touch my right hand. My hand was intact. It was like it had never been severed in the first place.

“Ah...”

I spent two hours just touching my hands. The right hand was still attached. It was an obvious fact. But I felt so pleased and thankful as I finally realized the value of it.

I belatedly realized that I was crying. I dried off my tears and looked at the clock. 8:18 am. That meant I had awakened around 6 a.m.

I got up from the bed and stretched to loosen my tense muscles. Everything was the same as it had been before I went to sleep. Not only my right hand, but the small scrapes on my body and the dirt and urine on my clothes were all cleaned.

Was it cleaned? Or had I even been dirty in the first place?

The windows opened very easily. The morning scenery spread out, telling me that this moment was reality. How could I tell if last night was real?

It was as simple as opening a window. I opened my mouth.

"Check ability."

Chapter 4 - Day 2, 2nd Floor

I didn't really think that the words would appear. I couldn't adapt when it was such a bright morning.

[Endurance: 11]

[Concentration: 11]

[Willpower: 12]

“12 willpower?”

Obviously, I had raised Pain Tolerance to level four. Nevertheless, willpower was only at 12 points. It seemed like the changes in decimal numbers wasn't so simple.

I covered my face with both hands and sat on the bed. I recalled what happened in the dungeon yesterday. Memories of tears, a runny nose and punching a wall with a severed hand came to mind.

I couldn't bear it and fainted. After I woke up, I had crawled like a madman towards the stairs. It was painful, to the extent that I had thought I'd rather die.

Now I had to return to the dungeon at midnight tonight. Was it worth continuing after all that pain I experienced yesterday? I asked myself the question. The answer came straight away.

“Am I crazy?”

There were no flaws in my brain so why did I ask this question? 10 times. 100 times. 1,000 times. It was right even if I asked myself 10,000 times.

Pain? It was irrelevant. I could endure it anyway. There was no going back. If I poured in hard work then I would definitely get benefits.

In reality, I clenched my teeth and endured it, no matter how sick I was. My abilities would definitely rise up and break through the limits.

Okay. I came to a conclusion. I got up from the bed. I cleaned up the mess cluttering my room. I did the laundry, washed the dishes and threw out the old garbage.

After a shower and brunch, I felt more motivated than I had been in a long time. Okay. I braced myself and started on the work that I needed to do.

That's right. It was an outsourced coding job that I received from a senior graduate. I opened the used notebook that I'd owned for three years.

Dungeon?

Of course it was the most important issue. But I only knew three things about the second floor: it would become bigger, monsters will emerge and I would meet someone else.

None of my other questions had any answers. If I could carry a weapon then I would start preparing.

So the only thing I could do was wait patiently until midnight. Should I spend all day worrying about it? Wasn't that a waste?

The dungeon was certainly a gold mine but this was now. My current living expenses were more important than the unknown talents I might get in the future. And what if I experience the change in having ascended stats while working?

Although they weren't over 10, abilities were able to rise and my concentration was also 11 points. The coding wasn't a very difficult task. It was easy to buy other companies' code and attach it. However, it was a major challenge for me. In order to save on costs, I decided to write the code myself.

Although the due date was relaxed, I had a free schedule so it should be easily finished by next week. I started at 11:45 am. If I didn't do anything else and worked hard then I should be finished by dinner.

"Good."

I opened the screen and launched the Eclipse window. For a while, it was silent except for the banging on the keyboard.

Tadak! Tadadak!

...

...

Well.

I hadn't checked my cell phone yet but I was almost certainly finished. It was sometimes like that when the work was fun or urgent. There didn't seem to be any apparent differences.

Anyway, I worked until I finished.

After putting the code on the server, I stretched while feeling somewhat disappointed. Was it too greedy to want a dramatic change? Maybe I should buy a lunch box from the convenience store...

"Eh?"

It seemed like my eyes weren't working. I rubbed them and

looked once again. The clock's minute and hour hand still remained in the same spot.

It was 3:40 pm.

I hadn't looked at the clock while working. The reason why I thought it was evening was because I knew my maximum speed.

I'd expected it to be as early as 6 pm. Maybe 7 pm at the latest. Or maybe even later than expected.

But 3:40 pm?

Only that much time has passed? Did I really finish all of it? I decided to review the code once again. It was clean. Even if it wasn't perfect, it was as good as it could get with my present skills. Yet... I had finished it nearly twice as quickly.

This was completely crazy.

Kkoruruk!

An alarm started ringing. I hadn't felt hungry until now, but once I was aware it was terrible. I had eaten the same amount of rice that I normally did, yet I was starving before it was even dinner time.

My abilities had risen from 10 to 11.

Even if I didn't know the details... Maybe it made a far greater difference than I thought. Anyway, my work was finished so I decided to have a meal.

I felt slightly at ease as I went into the convenience store. I bought a special bulgogi lunch box that was to my taste. I also got an extra cider bottle.

As I returned, I saw a red-haired person smoking in front of the building: An Su-hyun.

"..."

He looked me up and down while smoking and beckoned. I had to comply as he was smoking right in front of the entrance. As I approached, he blew out smoke and said,

"Did you dump that?"

He was referring to the garbage dump site. I had stacked up all the convenience store lunch boxes there.

"It isn't me."

"No, you are clearly holding the same product in your hand."

What was with this bastard? He even looked at what I bought?

There was no use in arguing.

If I had describe him to a friend, he was the manager of the building. He was the only son of the building owners. He was the same age as me but we disliked each other, and I prayed never to encounter him. However, his parents were pretty good to me.

They asked me to be the private tutor of their son and paid extra tutoring fees. Every time school finished, I tried my best to help him. But he never listened in class. He didn't do the homework and received a shocking score in the mock exam. No university I knew would accept a score of 777.

It was crazy.

His parents weren't familiar with university admission so he used the pretext of studying to receive a salary for the building manager position.

Even though his parents owned a separate house on the rooftop, he stayed in a rented room in the name of concentrating. Of course, he didn't pay rent.

I didn't think I could control my mouth and I wanted to continue staying in this building, so I quit the tutoring. I hated the thought of looking pathetic if he tried to pick a fight with me. Oh, it was true that I did look pathetic in front of him.

"Be more conscientious. Yes?"

A cigarette butt came flying towards me while he said such things. I couldn't hit An Su-hyun. There was nothing I could do so I walked past An Su-hyun. His words could be heard from behind me. "It's true. Everything they say about students from O University."

There were many sick minded friends in this world. I couldn't become angry when encountering all of them. I wasn't made enough to provoke them. It was only occasionally that their values and way of life were so incomprehensible that I thought they were quite sad. If I was in that position, I would have lived better.

Well, I wouldn't know unless it really happened to me.

My first impression was that the second floor was no different from the first.

The only thing was that the path split into three as soon as I descended the stairs. I turned around and looked at the stairs.

[You are not allowed to step on the stairs again. If your feet touch the stairs, you are out.]

The moment I stepped on the stairs, the second floor had appeared. Then we couldn't go back to the first floor? I pulled out

my cell phone and took the right path.

[Cartography LV 2. 29/200]

While drawing the map, I paid the utmost attention to my field of vision while moving.

Monsters below E rank. If I thought of this as a game, the first monster in a game wouldn't be one that put the player at risk. However, the possibility of suffering considerable pain like having my wrist cut off was large. I had to be as careful as possible. I was tense every time I had to turn a corner.

Then I heard footsteps coming from around the corner.

"..."

I breathed and waited in a spot where I could see clearly. Soon, the shape of a person popped around the corner!

"Aaaagh!"

It wasn't me who screamed wildly.

I had been prepared after hearing the footsteps, and I had expected it to be another explorer instead of a monster. But that

didn't mean I wasn't surprised.

"W-w-what? Y-you are Kim Hee-chul."

The person called my name. I hadn't expected the other human to be An Su-hyun. An Su-hyun was like me...

Was it that common to enter this dungeon? If so, how many other people who lived close were in the dungeon?

"No... I-it is natural to cry out when seeing another person."

"Yes. 'I see that you are here.'"

"I was surprised because you suddenly f***ing popped out..."

An Su-hyun had been shocked when he saw me but now he spat out curses.

"..."

"..."

It became silent as his shaking calmed down somewhat. There was nothing to say.

"I will go this way."

I talked first as I took a step. It wouldn't be helpful to stay with someone like him. An Su-hyun didn't answer but followed behind me.

"Hey, what are you doing with your cell phone?" He asked suddenly.

"Drawing a map."

"Map?"

"The paths can be confusing." I intentionally snorted and it briefly echoed in the cave.

"I had roughly visualized the structure in my head but you probably have to draw a map since you can't remember."

"It is your nature not to take notes."

"Why bother with all that effort? Well, I also thought about doing it."

He didn't ask about the 'Cartography' skill above the cell phone so he probably couldn't see it. Of course, I didn't feel the need to explain it to him.

"Let's walk a little faster. It's straight ahead."

An Su-hyun moved forward and disappeared from my sight.

“Eh?”

I made a sound a few seconds later. When I caught up with him, An Su-hyun was standing next to a box.

[Wooden Box. There seems to be no lock. It is possible to smash it.]

That box.

It was exactly the same as the trap that cut my wrist.

An Su-hyun showed no interest in the box. He was frowning and looking away from it. He had been on the first floor as well. I squatted in front of the box. An Su-hyun, who was trying to pass the box, frowned.

When I opened the box lid, it was still dark inside. I had placed my hand in here yesterday and suffered. In the end, it turned out well.

“Are you thinking of putting your hand in there?”

I raised my head. An Su-hyun was making a strange smile.

"I just opened it but I was worried due to the darkness. Doesn't it look like there's something in there?"

This bastard was trying to trick me. He thought I didn't know about the box. I stared at the open lid of the box. "I know since I've played games before. Usually, something like this would have a trap."

My tone was overly casual compared to normal. I tried to be confident against the antagonism.

"I think that you're thinking too much."

"Then you should put your hand in. The contents won't dry out." Although I was still going to check it out. Even if the outside was the same, it didn't mean the contents were.

"If anything comes out then I will keep it."

"Do as you like~."

An Su-hyun's eyes shone with expectation.

At the same time, he moved back. It seemed like he was trying to find a good position to watch. Unfortunately for him, I had no intention of meeting his expectations.

It really could be a trap. Even though I could raise my talent, I didn't know what would happen on the second floor so there was no point losing my wrist.

I thought about the words I saw over the box yesterday.

[Wooden Box. There seems to be no lock. It is possible to smash it.]

Did I need to smash it? I knew for sure. This was a box that needed to be smashed. I kicked the box.

Pak!

At the same time, there was a cheerful sound as words popped up.

[Item has been acquired.]

Chapter 5 - Day 2, 2nd Floor Battle

"Nothing... Nothing?"

An Su-hyun's eyes widened as his expectations were betrayed. The shattered box was empty. He couldn't see anything among the pieces of wood. But my vision was different.

[Item has been registered in the inventory.]

[Use the command 'Inventory' to show your current possessions.]

[If you want to take something out of the inventory, focus on the name and used the command 'Eject.'

"Inventory."

Then I could see what I obtained from the box.

[Maram's Leather Gloves. Equipment item. Rank D.]

[The personal effects of a first class boxer. It is made from well-polished crimson bear leather. If the weapon isn't a magic sword, it isn't unreasonable to be able to grab the blade with

the glove.]

[Significantly reduces the load on the arm bones/muscles/joints when worn.]

"Eject."

As soon as I shouted, something heavy fell into my hands.

It was a pair of very dark brown leather gloves. They covered my elbow to the first knuckle of my fingers.

“I-Inventory!”

An Su-hyun shouted in a panicked voice but nothing came up. I looked at the gloves while listening to him shout two then three times.

“Inventory! ... Inventory!”

There was a strap to tie it like shoelaces and proper places where I could put my fingers. It was comfortable. I hadn't tied the strings yet but I could feel that the texture perfectly adhered to the shape of my arm. Once I made a fist, the parts attached to my fingers gently folded. Indeed. This truly was a glove.

“That came out from the box?”

"Yes. It's good."

An Su-hyun bit his lip.

He crossed his arms and I could see everything he was feeling without him saying anything. He said the words with his own mouth so his pride didn't allow him to argue for the item.

I started walking again with a casual expression. I could feel his greedy gaze towards my gloved arm.

"You're not a boxer..."

Just when he was going to try and dispute it... The first monster appeared.

[Blind Mouse. Type: Animal. Rank H]

[Wild mice have inhabited caves for generations. Sometimes the adults can grow as big as a calf.]

A creature the size of a small puppy appeared in front of us. Instead of eyes, it had antennae on the pink furless body. H? ABCDEFGH...

Wherever it was on the alphabet, it didn't seem like a strong monster. While I was thinking this, An Su-hyun suddenly jumped out. He turned around and excitedly kicked it.

Bam!

The kicked rat struck the wall, had a few spasms and stopped breathing.

[Meat can be obtained if there is suitable cutlery.]

"What? Nothing dropped." He looked down at the dead mouse. Even though it wasn't a tiger, An Su-hyun looked proud that he had caught something. If he had received a talent from his previous action then I would have seen it on his face. But it didn't feel that way at all.

There was no need to observe An Su-hyun as the fact was soon disclosed. After they killed the mouse, small animals started to appear on their path.

[Luminous Bat. Type: Animal. Rank H]

[Bats that enjoy animal blood. They are timid and the strength of their teeth is very weak. They mainly hunt blind mice.]

[Flat Salamander. Type: Animal. Rank H]

[They secrete body fluids that induce nausea in predators in order to survive. There is no toxicity unless ingested through the mouth.]

They were all like the cave mouse. Monsters that couldn't even kill young children.

“These scum! Ick! Ick!” An Su-hyun was very motivated.

I suppose it was due to the box a little while ago. It seemed like he had determined not to let me snatch anything in the future. He couldn't kill all the monsters alone, but was kicking diligently trying to anyway.

Then he suddenly looked into the air and shouted.

“Eh? What is this?”

He expressed so clearly that he had received a talent. It was the first time he received a talent. An Su-hyun stared at his legs that were covered with the fluids of rats and salamanders.

Then he suddenly kicked the air. Was it a kick?

Certainly An Su-hyun had successfully killed the monsters just through kicking.

"What is it?" I asked and for a moment, it seemed like An Su-hyun was going to answer. But he closed his mouth and smiled.

"It's nothing."

"...."

It wasn't nothing.

I estimated that he got the kicking talent after kicking 10 or so times.

I looked down on both hands. I had vambraces. It was an acquired item. If it was possible for kicks, then wasn't it possible for punches? I decided to prove my hypothesis.

I beat the small animals with my fists.

Bam! Bam!

It happened when I killed exactly 12 monsters.

[Talent has been acquired.]

[Talent - Punching: The efficiency of your fist will increase according to the level. Muscle strength, stamina and reflexes have slightly increased.]

“...”

I was pleased to see it but I maintained my indifferent expression. An Su-hyun had been watching me for a while. When I didn't show any signs that I'd gained a talent, he developed a superiority complex.

We continued to advance through the maze.

“Eh!”

An Su-hyun shouted and moved forward again.

It was a wooden box.

Bakak!

The kicked box was once again empty. An Su-hyun gazed at the air.

He had obtained an item.

"Inventory!"

His grin was so wide that it almost went up to his ears.

"Eject!"

He was holding a sword in his hand.

The blade was around 30cm long and the leather sheath had very stylish workmanship.

I couldn't see the details of the item with my eyes.

"Rank C, isn't it awesome?"

He said as he pulled the sword from the leather sheath. The silver blade had a vertical centre groove and looked quite sharp.

"Okay. It's good."

An Su-hyun studied my face as much as the blade.

He smiled as if he came to the conclusion that his sword was much better than my gloves.

"Yes yes. No matter how much you train, the human body clearly has limits. I needed a weapon."

He wielded the sword and whistled.

Fortunately, they arrived at a room shortly after that.

The narrow passage widened and stairs leading down could be seen in front of them.

[Stairs. It leads to the 3rd floor.]

[Changes in the following floor: Dungeon space has expanded. You can encounter +1 explorer. Monsters below E rank will emerge.]

"What the heck, it's over?"

An Su-hyun didn't say anything else so I decided to measure the width of the open space. I took a few steps to the left and a wall appeared. If I walked a few steps to the right then there was another wall. The other side was the same so it was probably a 20 metre square room.

"Hey, don't wander off alone, let's go together."

An Su-hyun followed me closely. We moved to the other side of the room.

"Heok!"

"...!"

This time, I was just as surprised as An Su-hyun.

It was because there was a likeness of a human leaning in one corner.

"... Is that a training dummy?"

It was literally like An Su-hyun said. It was the dummy that was used to practice drills and forms. Someone had put clothes on the dummy. The top and pants were reminiscent of martial arts movies.

[Wooden Dummy, Scold. Type: Golem Rank E.]

[A device used since ancient times to train young pupils. The last recorded action seemed to be the basic behaviour of a technique but it is unknown until you try it.]

[Inactive state. It won't activate unless it is attacked first.]

[Named Monster.]

“Ah~. Is this the boss room?”

An Su-hyun also obtained knowledge about the dummy. He suddenly tried to kick but I blocked grabbed his shoulder.

"What the!?"

Was he confident about fighting it himself? He shot me a nasty expression and shrugged. Of course, I didn't pay attention.

“Rank E is three stages higher than the monsters we've fought.”

“So?”

He was stubborn until the end.

This bastard, was he 100% confident he could win?

“If there is an emergency then we can escape to the stairs over there.” An Su-hyun pointed to the stairs.

His words weren't wrong but I had no intention of going down here. I still didn't know how much of this map was left.

"I think..."

"No, I hate it."

In fact, I had been thinking about punching him. There was one reason to help him here and that was if he held the sword, I would be able to steal it.

But An Su-hyun's curiosity exceeded my thoughts. He kicked the dummy so suddenly that I couldn't stop it.

Creak.

The dummy shook for a moment before raising its head.

I moved back two or three steps.

An Su-hyun raised the sword and laughed.

"Okay, let's play..."

Bam!

It was a quick jab, reminiscent of a boxer.

The problem was that An Su-hyun was the one hit.

The moment that it happened, An Su-hyun's nose was crushed.

The punch came from the dummy.

"...Eh...?"

I was surprised at the unimaginable speed. In addition, there was a strong impact. An Su-hyun groaned and couldn't fight back.

Unfortunately, the dummy wasn't as stupid as him.

Bam!

Once again, an outstretched fist struck An Su-hyun's abdomen.

His waist formed a 'ㄱ' angle.

The bar on top of his head was reduced by about a tenth.

"...Keok."

Before the moaning even finished, he was hit again by an uppercut.

At this point, I made a very obvious judgement. I turned around and ran. In fact, it was probably the right move. It might be funny to say, but the dummy was a pro.

I lost my footing for a moment due to the unexpected strength.

Deopsseok.

I'd only taken a few steps when I felt cold fingers grab my collar. Had it caught me? I turned around.

I made the right choice to block with my arm.

Bam!

It didn't hurt so much due to my gloves, but my body stumbled back. Being hit was a big deal. Almost instinctively, I fell back and crouched.

The dummy immediately crashed into me and got into the mount position. It was similar to the UFC matches that I watched to relieve stress during the exam period. The dummy's fist hit my belly.

Bam!

Bam!

[Current Balance: 112/123]

Bam!

[Current Balance: 108/123]

Surprisingly, the power itself wasn't that fearsome. Perhaps there wasn't much different between it and me.

The problem was the mindless speed and skill, as well as the metal material at the end of its fists. This was used to teach 'young pupils'?

Bam! Bam!

The punches continued without stopping. I opened my eyes and looked up at the dummy.

"Eu..."

I could see a look of utter confusion on An Su-hyun's face. My HP Bar was gone down due to the uppercuts I couldn't block. The dummy turned around.

I carefully raised my body. This was a chance.

With all my strength, I hugged the dummy from behind. I put my arms between the armpits and held them together. It looked like the dummy didn't have that much strength after all. It was crazy but the dummy could be grabbed like this!

"Hit it!"

I shouted to An Su-hyun.

"...Ah."

An Su-hyun was currently in a bad condition. His eyes were at half mast. His whole body was shaking.

"Hit it! An Su-hyun!"

"Ah... Eu..."

At that moment, the dummy changed its posture. It turned its joints into a position impossible for humans and started trying to escape from my arms. It was a heavy blow to An Su-hyun.

Jjalgrang!

The sword fell from his hand and hit the ground. An Su-hyun ran away from the dummy that was still tangled up with me. There was a faint smell of urine coming from him.

"Hey!"

An Su-hyun's footsteps couldn't be heard as he disappeared out of sight. He had run down the stairs. At the same time, the dummy had completely escaped.

Quark!

It instantly grabbed my collar and pulled me away from the stairs. It seemed like the dummy didn't want to let me get away.

I tried to squat down like I did before. This time, the dummy was faster. Its fist struck my abdomen.

Bam!

It was a fist I couldn't stop with the vambraces.

[Current Balance: 85/123]

Too much pain. It felt like my intestines were twisting.

“Keo... Heok...”

I held my belly and desperately tried to retreat. My back hit a wall. The dummy was coming towards me like a terminator. I was going to die here.

[The level of a talent has risen.]

[Pain Tolerance LV 4 -> LV 5. Related abilities have increased.]

[Opening benefits received from reaching LV 5.]

[Technique: Limiter Release has been acquired.]

Chapter 6 - Day 2, 2nd Floor Complete

[Technique - Limiter Release: By turning off the subconscious safeguard, you can greatly reduce the pain you feel and raise your strength beyond normal limits. Your body will bear the burden of being pushed beyond its limits. As the pain is blurred, there are a few cases where people don't realize they are self-destructing.]

[Pain reduction and muscle growth rate will rise in proportion to the level.]

[Current level: LV 1. 1/100]

Yes. Yes. Yes.

I roughly understood. Thank you for everything. But couldn't you tell me how to use it?

Kwang!

I was backed against the wall and being hit by the terminator. No, the dummy's punch hit the wall. I was definitely glad I had the effects of Pain Tolerance. I couldn't retreat due to being hit in the stomach.

[In order to activate, the command is ‘activate - technique name’.]

[In order to disable, the command is ‘disable - technique name’.]

Activate. Technique - Limiter Release.

I should have said it with my mouth, but ended up saying it inwardly due to being punched. But it worked.

[Muscle strength has exceeded the limit.]

[Muscle strength: 11]

My senses suddenly disappeared. It felt like my whole body, excluding the head, had received anesthesia.

Bam! Bam! Bam!

I squatted down and guarded my body with both arms. There was no pain at all. It just felt like I was being pushed. My heart started beating wildly. It was very similar to the first time I drank coffee. It felt like I could do anything.

I knew what had happened to my body, and now was the time to act as quickly as possible. I gently released my guard and straightened my body. The dummy's fist slammed through the hole in my defenses.

A hit.

Pak!

It didn't hurt.

It didn't mean there wasn't an impact. My head shook and I could taste blood in my mouth. But there was no pain. Most importantly, my eyes didn't close despite being hit. Was there such a thing as fighting without pain?

I stretched out a hand towards the dummy. It didn't matter how many blows I took, I just focused on catching it. It was different from earlier. In a fight of strength, I could easily overcome the dummy like it was a child!

Kwatang.

The dummy fell to the ground and I trapped it from above. Once again, this guy's weakness was obvious. If I wasn't shaken by its fists, then I could easily press and hold it down.

[Current Balance: 59/123]

Although I had been hit quite a bit before this, that nightmare was now over.

Son of a b*tch.

I sat down on the dummy's abdomen and used my knees to pin its arms. How should I kill this guy? Usually, these enemies would be able to move even after body parts are torn off. The head or torso usually had to be broken before they stopped working. The torso or the head?

I decided the head was my target.

Putting all of my strength into my fists, I started a barrage of punches aimed at the dummy's head.

Bam! Bam! Bam!

In a matter of seconds, we had exchanged roles from punisher and the pummeled, completely reversing the tide of battle.

[Current Balance: 54/123]

[Current Balance: 51/123]

[Current Balance: 48/123]

My health was reduced as I injured myself. Blood covered my fists. No matter how much the gloves protected me, I was still punching solid wood.

But I kept on punching.

I didn't have much strength, but the face of the dummy was gradually breaking into splinters. "Just a little more! Quickly! Die! Die!" Maybe it was the effect of Limiter Release that made my personality a little more radical.

[Named Monster. Wooden Dummy, Scold has been handled.]

Suddenly, the dummy's face looked like crushed garlic. The body I held down no longer reacted to anything. It was finished.

Hu. As I breathed in and out, I saw that I had 30 HP remaining. Still, I felt none of the pain in my body. Wasn't there a command to disable the technique? As a test, I just thought about it in my head.

Disable. Technique - Limiter Release.

It was effective as all the pain came flooding back.

"Uck!"

My shoulders felt like the muscle had been torn from the bone. My elbows and wrists were screaming and the bleeding fists looked raw and gory.

I had crushed a wooden head with my fists. Perhaps it was for this reason. However, I'd done it with something else in mind.

[Punching. LV 2. 87/200]

[Pain Tolerance. LV 5 29/1600]

Although only one of the two talents were updated, I had gained quite a few points for them.

It happened as I finished checking my body and got up. Smoke started rising from the head of the broken dummy.

"Heok?"

If it was reviving then I would instantly run towards the stairs. Even if I used Limiter Release again, I only had 30 health and would lose that from the punching.

But my worst fears didn't come true. The smoke just wrapped around my fists and my head. To be honest, I was worried that it was the dummy's 'curse,' but that fear didn't last long.

[You have learnt the basics of the martial arts imprinted on the training dummy.]

[Technique - Ravenous Wolf Fist has been acquired.]

At that moment, an enormous amount of data filled my mind.

[Technique - Ravenous Wolf Fist: A martial art inspired by the hunting of ravenous wolves. It is characterized by the aggression that sacrifices defense in favor of hitting the opponent. The creator is an obscure master of fist techniques who kept a low profile.]

[No level. Information learning type.]

It was a strange experience. The information that filled my mind wasn't two dimensional things like letters or pictures. Rather than 'information', it was 'experience.' It was like I directly experienced

the martial art before my senses cleared again.

I formed a fist. I had never experienced martial arts before, but I tried to take a stance. The preparation was no different from boxing, Just step with that foot and... Let's see, step here...

Hak!

“Uaack!”

I had forgotten for a moment that the condition of my arms wasn't normal.

[Pain Tolerance. LV 5 30/1600]

Still, I knew for sure that I could perform it with my fist. All of the dummy's movements belonged to this martial art. Of course, the speed of my fist was much slower.

If I didn't look at my stats and just the actions, it seemed like the techniques had been imprinted into my body. If I knew more about it, then I could use this in a real fight.

“...”

The previous fight popped into my head. That An Su-hyun

bastard. I scanned the ground with gleaming eyes. The loot he left behind was shining on the ground.

[Elmer's Dummy Destroyer. Equipment item. Rank C.]

[Able to destroy vital spots during a surprise attack, it is a stolen sword from the collection of 'Elmer' who hated golems. The quality is normal against regular creatures.]

[When attacking an object that moves with magic or mechanical principles such as golems, it will damage the 'nucleus' or 'manipulating object' of the target.]

Well... It seemed like this was the source of confidence behind An Su-hyun attacking the wooden dummy so fearlessly. I didn't know if I cracked the nucleus, but according to the description of the item, it was a good weapon against golems. An Su-hyun just overlooked the fact that the dummy was a professional fighter.

[Use the 'load' command to put it into the inventory.]

I was happy to take the sword that had been thrown away. As the sword disappeared from my hand, I cracked my back.

"Hoo."

Tired. Although there was no bleeding, so my HP didn't decrease, my whole body felt heavy. I really wanted to lie down on a bed right now. But I couldn't just yet.

I didn't know how much of this dungeon floor I had left. "Just a little more strength." I turned on the map again. I could still get experience for the Cartography skill. I moved my weary body back the way I came.

Well, the remaining areas didn't take as long as I thought. Only H rank monsters emerged. I found three more wooden boxes and kicked them, but all that emerged were the trap blades.

The only thing that stood out was that I found another staircase. It was the one that An Su-hyun came down. I didn't think much of it and went on my way. Still, there was some success with the map.

[Cartography LV 3. 241/400]

By the time I reached level three and gained some experience, I was at the end of the dungeon's second floor. And in that place...

[Stairs. It leads to the 3rd floor.]

[Changes in the following floor: Dungeon space has expanded.]

You can encounter +1 explorer. Monsters below E rank will emerge.]

Stairs? The room was a dead end with the exact same staircase. What did it mean? I thought about it for a few minutes and came up with a few speculations.

The other staircase and this one. There were two staircases that led to different third floors.

I thought about earlier. An Su-hyun was on a different first floor from me.

There must be countless first, second and third floors that were exactly the same. Right now, there might be many people thinking the same thing as me on the other second floors: the stairs ascending and descending just created another maze.

Well, there was no point thinking about the whole structure of the dungeon just yet. If two stairs led to different third floors, should I go down the same stairs as An Su-hyun?

Honestly, my first thought was ‘No.’ I disliked An Su-hyun. An Su-hyun had abandoned me before and being in the same place as him would be stressful. But another idea came to my mind. An Su-hyun was a jerk.

At least on this floor, the dungeon seemed to encourage

competition rather than cooperation. I couldn't get an item when the other person did. The number of monsters was limited and they gave small experience.

If two people fought the wooden dummy together, would the Ravenous Wolf Fist technique be passed on to both of them? Probably not.

In other words: Dungeon space has expanded. You can encounter +1 explorer.

This is what those words meant. It would be harder to take things. Also, the number of people that things would have to be shared between would increase. On the third floor, I would encounter two people.

If I followed An Su-hyun, I could be assured that one of the two competitors was a fool.

If the third floor was no different from the second floor and competition was encouraged, it would certainly be profitable. However, if there was an area where cooperation was required then we would fail.

I worried about it for a bit. Then I descended a staircase.

[2nd floor cleared.]

Chapter 7 - Day 3, 3rd Floor Encounter

6:00 in the morning.

[One you return from the dungeon, items in use will automatically return to your inventory.]

My day started with those words.

Inventory. The words ‘Maram’s Leather Gloves’ and ‘Elmer’s Dummy Destroyer’ popped up. It wasn’t even necessary to say the commands, I just had to think them.

Check abilities.

[Endurance: 11]

[Concentration: 11]

[Willpower: 12]

Um.

Although Cartography had gone up quite a bit, the fact that there

were no changes to my stats meant the difference between numbers was quite significant. I wanted to check how much experience I needed before Cartography leveled up again.

Check talents.

[Cartography LV 3. 241/400]

[Pain Tolerance. LV 5. 42/1600]

[Punching. LV 2. 114/200]

[No.099 ??? LV 0. No experience.]

No.099? What was this?

[Unique Talent - No.999 ??? : ?????]

Despite the number attached to it, I didn't feel bad because it was in the talent category. But when had I received this? I always carefully read the messages that appeared in front of me, and I'd never noticed this before.

[Among all the explorers, the talent that only the first explorer who acquired it can monopolize is called a unique talent.]

[The basic acquisition method is similar to acquiring a normal talent, but it should be consistent with the inherent nature of the explorer and their fundamental desires. After acquiring the talent, the explorer must be fully aware of the desire to awaken it. Enabled.]

The more I looked, the less I knew. My nature? Fundamental desires?

There wasn't even the talent name, only question marks, so I couldn't get any sense of what this talent was... Well, I didn't need to worry too much about it.

Since I had gained the talent, I must have done something that met the criteria. I would think about it in the dungeon.

I took a shower, ate breakfast and roughly packed my backpack. During testing periods, the cafes that were open on weekends wouldn't be that busy. I headed straight to a cafe.

"Oh, I want to sleep forever." After silently working on the algorithm on the paper for two hours, Su-yeon put down her mechanical pencil. Her cute face held a rotten expression.

"Didn't you sleep last night?"

"I stayed up late and only slept for maybe four hours."

In fact, it wasn't a matter of having gotten enough sleep. The problems on the table were so difficult that it was making everybody tired. Five people, including me, were studying in a study room at a cafe.

The algorithm we were working on wasn't simply a matter of finding the answer. Once the correct answer was unconditionally found, we would have to find a more efficient method.

That's why a few people were needed. One person picked a problem, squeezed their head and shared the solution with the others. Well... Smart people didn't need to do this. The fact that I was at O University meant there was a lot of effort and talent, but the geniuses were really beyond my imagination.

"Uh, the one Oppa is starting is a problem I tried the other day. It will be difficult."

"Yes. It looks hard. But when did you attempt this?"

"It's a fairly famous problem."

Dong-wook hyung, who was listening to the conversation,

glanced at me and said, "It was a problem on last year's SZ electronic test."

"Ah really? I didn't know that. If several problems from that exam comes out... Isn't there a rule that you can't reveal the questions?"

"Some seniors memorized it before they left the exam."

"Surely not..."

"There are many such humans. We can only gaze at them from afar..."

I bit my nails and concentrated on the problem while listening to the conversation between Su-yeon and Dong-wook. At the same time, his other hand put down the mechanical pencil. "... I think I did everything..."

Su-yeon-and Dong-wook turned to face me. "Already?"

I handed over my piece of paper instead of answering. Their eyes widened with surprise as they looked over it.

"Wah." Su-yeon's mouth dropped open.

"... Hey, you must have seen this beforehand."

She didn't believe it. Dong-wook stared at me. "That isn't the Hee-chul I know."

Dong-wook beckoned to the other two people in the room. They had been listening to the conversation so they both came over to look at my paper.

"It looks good."

"Hee-chul's condition is good today." I shrugged, feeling half proud and half shy.

Honestly, it just felt like something had clicked. I felt like this was nothing. However, it was the first time I had been faced with a problem of this difficulty.

I spoke a few words to the members of the study group before suddenly looking at the clock. Ah. It was that time already... "Oh, I will leave first. I'm going, Hyung."

I hurriedly gathered my things on the table. Originally, I would have stayed until one or two in the morning. "What, has Hee-chul's confidence increased due to the studying?"

"It's not like that." I couldn't say that I was going to a dungeon, so I just said goodbye and left the study room.

"Oppa."

I looked back to see Su-yeon following me. "That thing that Oppa did a while ago."

"Huh?"

"That paper, can I have a look at it?"

Her hands joined together in a shy gesture but my hands were already opening my bag. Anyway, I was a normal Korean male in university. The other men in the room didn't have the courage to embarrass themselves in front of the sole female.

"Here."

"Thank you! I'll return it."

Su-yeon accompanied me to the elevator outside the study cafe.

"Hee-chul oppa..."

"Huh?"

As the elevator door opened, Su-yeon suddenly blurted out, "I've thought this for a long time but you sure are hard-working."

"Eh..." I couldn't reply and waved my hands. Su-yeon also waved

at me. The elevator doors closed.

“Hah.” Hard-working. The words weren’t wrong. I probably wouldn’t have been able to reach this far without working hard.

Originally, I wouldn’t have been able to solve the problem. But it wasn’t uncommon. It was hardly the first time I had been unable to solve a problem. Maybe the abilities I gained in the dungeon helped.

“It is still insufficient.” I thought back. Su-yeon and Doon-wook’s story. I wasn’t a genius and there were many people superior to me. Even if I did well, I was a long way away from being a genius. There was quite a few people who could do what I could.

Even Su-yeon was outstanding enough to enroll in a science high school for exceptional children. It was the same for the other study group members. Yes, it was still insufficient.

Abilties. More talent was needed.

[Arrived on the 3rd floor.]

Upon my arrival, “Aaaah!” I could hear shouting and running outside of my field of view. It was An Su-hyun. Did he arrive a little earlier because he stepped on the stairs before me? He

wouldn't be running away due to my arrival.

There must be something else; something that terrified An Su-hyun. I had to maintain my vigilance. I could hear footsteps, but they were different from An Su-hyun's footsteps that had already disappeared. They were a little slower and lighter.

"Kuoh..." A rattling sound.

Then the owner of the footsteps came into view.

[Lime Goblin (Worker). Type: Ajin (Demi-human). Rank F.]

[A goblin tribe that was defeated above ground and ended up settling in the dungeon. They have their own caste system and magic culture that is different from existing goblins. The body type is bigger than other goblins, but in the case of workers, they have no weapons or magic and low health, so their combat power is very low.]

Certainly, it didn't match the image of goblins that I had in my head.

It was approximately 160cm tall, with blue skin. There was a bulging stomach and thin arms and legs. If I hadn't gotten a description, then from its appearance I'd have thought it was more a famished demon from Hell than a goblin.

If I wasn't in a corner then I would have run away, but unfortunately I was. No, it wasn't unfortunate. I raised both fists. I had already put on the gloves before entering the dungeon.

"Come." It understood my words.

"Kya!" The goblin approached while waving sharp nails. There was no need to flee backwards. I was bigger than the goblin and it had much shorter arms.

I stepped forward, and my fist aimed for its chin.

Bakak!

I felt something breaking as my fist slammed into its jaw. After collapsing and wriggling a few times, the goblin didn't get up again.

[Punching. LV 2. 116/200]

The goblin was wearing a skirt made of leather. It didn't seem to have any value but a small pouch was hanging from it.

Jingle.

Two coins with a faded colour emerged. A person's face was carved on the back and front.

[Tellian Empire Coin (Copper).]

[An imperial coin that still holds value. Made of bronze material. It is commonly used among communities or species within the dungeon.]

I placed the coins in my pocket and started walking. I realized after taking a few steps that there was a change in the dungeon.

On the first and second floors, the dungeon was a 'cave.' Although the paths had a certain width, there were stalactites on the walls. But on this floor, bricks was laid on the outer walls of the caves, despite a significant number of them crumbling.

There were traces of collapsed pillars and arches. There were traces of marks on the walls that used to be pictures. I could see that they weren't drawn by the same people who built the ruins. The cave murals were unveiled in the areas where the bricks had fallen down.

It was the work of the goblins. The pictures were red like they had been drawn in blood. They were simple pictures reminiscent of ancient civilizations such as Egypt or the Mayans. That's why it was even creepier.

Goblins were creatures that hunted humans and animals, offering the bodies as sacrifices to the evil spirits that they worshipped. ... To be honest, I was a bit scared. It was a dark narrow cave, where there were murals that seemed to be painted in blood on the walls.

“Grrr...”

“Heok!”

Two more goblins popped into my field of view and I jumped with fright.

Bam! Bam!

I punched both of them on the chin and knocked them down. I moved forward with my nerves on edge.

“... I’m scared.”

“Don’t worry, Oppa likes games like this...”

I could hear voices ahead. One was An Su-hyun. The other one was... A girl? Both voices were coming this way, so I waited patiently.

“Because the both of us are together... Kyak?!”

"What the!?"

An Su-hyun, who was facing the woman, hurriedly turned his head towards this side. He held the baseball bat in his hands like a club and had a confident expression on his face but... "Y-you are alive?"

The words involuntarily fell from his mouth. He thought I was dead? All of a sudden, a corner of my mind snapped. My tightly wound nerves erupted.

"Do you know him?"

"Eh... Uh, a friend from Room 405." He talked as if he knew the woman well, but An Su-hyun was still clutching the baseball bat. I put strength into my fists. I looked at him.

Think carefully. Act rationally, Kim Hee-chul.

"Good to meet you. The three of us should join together." An Su-hyun subtly ordered. I nodded. I calmed my excited heart as I thought, I had to move rationally.

As I approached him without any emotional response, An Su-hyun laughed with relief. "Okay. Since there is a woman here, we'll both protect her from getting hurt..."

Let's test it. I kicked An Su-hyun's ankles with my foot. "Ah!!" An Su-hyun flinched and immediately swung his bat. That reaction

time was impossible unless he had already decided to hit me in advance.

A normal person would jump after being kicked in the ankle, not swing a bat. He even cursed and didn't ask why I was doing this. But to be honest, I wanted it to end up like this.

I calmly blocked the bat before he finished his swing. The club and gloves made a sound as they collided with each other.

Pak!

Now it was my turn. I punched An Su-hyun exactly in the centre of his face.

Pak!

It wasn't an emotional judgment. No matter how rationally I thought, the answer was the same: a dog needed to be taught to listen to humans.

Chapter 8 - Day 3, 3rd Floor Control

One hit wouldn't be enough. I cornered An Su-hyun against a wall as my fist struck his abdomen. I did it again and again until his upper body bent over.

"S-Su-hyun oppa!" I reflexively frowned as I heard a woman's shrill scream.

"What is this? Why?"

Let's see. This wasn't a question that I would answer. I gazed at An Su-hyun's face. Fear could be clearly read in his eyes as his fingers held his bleeding nose. My fists were more violent due to what happened yesterday.

"Tell me. What happened yesterday?" It was a command to speak. An Su-hyun was conflicted, but he already had no strength left to hold his club. All that remained was his pride. A woman was right in front of him.

"Do you want more?"

"Yesterday..."

In the end, he confessed to yesterday's crime in a trembling voice. Despite the fact that he tried to justify his actions, he was the one who ran away alone in the first place. Disappointment flashed through the woman's eyes.

"I'm sorry. I have sinned greatly, so please forgive me."

An apology emerged from his mouth but it wasn't very meaningful. I extended the palm of my hand. An Su-hyun thought I would pull him up and reached for my hand.

"That's not it, hand me the club."

"Why..."

"Why should I trust you with a weapon?" If An Su-hyun had a weapon then he would there was a 100% probability that it would be aimed at the back of my head given half a chance.

"Give it to me."

"T-that is my item. I lent it to him."

The woman intervened. An Su-hyun perked up as he felt some hope. As if to corroborate this excuse, he pointed to the woman and said, "That's right... It isn't mine."

"Why does that matter?" I kicked at An Su-hyun who misunderstood and exposed his palms.

"Lower your eyes. Don't look at me. I want to kill you because I'm so irritated."

“...”

I said it, but I honestly thought it was childish. It was absurd for a grown man in his 20's to say such things. It was only appropriate for immature middle and high school students. Unfortunately, these were my thoughts.

There were dogs who couldn't be controlled through calm voices and logic, but instead through force. There were a lot of them. As many as the number of people in the world. No, maybe more than that. An Su-hyun was a dog.

I wasn't a genius who could manipulate a dog skillfully, nor did I have the patience of a saint. Just looking at a barking dog made me want to bite it back. I usually restrained myself but there were no laws here. There was no reason not to choose a more comfortable method.

[Talent has been acquired.]

[Talent - Compulsion: The ability to break the opponent's will with physical/verbal violence. Charisma will increase according to the level. Your persuasive powers and discipline will slightly increase.]

This was an unexpected development. It was evidence that my actions were successful. "I won't say it a third time." The dog

turned and revealed its belly.

I received the club.

[Old Ebony Club. Equipment item. Rank E.]

[A wooden bat made of top quality ebony wood. It seems to have been made for decorative purposes, but performs well as a blunt weapon due to the quality of the materials.]

"Oppa! That is mine..." The woman looked at her feet due to her fear. An Su-hyun didn't answer. He just looked at the ground with a terrible expression.

I asked the woman. "Any other weapons?"

"Huh?"

"I don't want to miss any other weapons." The woman shook her head.

"Uh, no. That is the only one... I thought it would be better to leave it to a man rather than wield it myself..."

"Are you familiar with An Su-hyun?"

She shook her head again. “Just... I live in the building. I know that is the manager... Today was the first time I’ve actually talked to that person.”

A little while ago, she had called An Su-hyun ‘Oppa.’ Now he was ‘that person.’ I could tell her type with one glance: a woman who was dependent on men. Today was the first time she spoke to the red-haired man but she had handed over a weapon.

She wasn’t the type to be a competitor. I put the club into my inventory.

“My...”

“Once I judge that it is safe, I’ll give it back.” I cut off her words. Even though she looked young, she knew how to behave. I pulled An Su-hyun up.

“That way, you will take the lead.”

“Excuse me. Hee-chul ssi, my words are serious...”

Look at this, it actually worked. A dog was trying to become a person. Of course, if he repeated the same behaviour then he might become a dog again.

“Just take a few steps. I will tell you the direction.” Thus, they started to awkwardly move together. I was successful. It was important that I now controlled the actions of these two people.

“Grrr...” The cries of goblins were heard in front of me, outside of my field of view.

“S-So many...” An Su-hyun stuttered as he stopped moving.

There weren’t just two goblins. Right now, five had appeared in front of us. I could hear cries from behind them as well.

“Excuse me... If I don’t have the club then my bare hands...”

“Both of you, stay here.”

“Eh?”

“Huh?” I just moved forward. I ran out with an outstretched fist, punching the face of the one in the lead and waited for the others.

“Gruk!”

I swung towards a goblin coming from the right. It was out with one hit to the chin. I kicked the one on the left, then followed up with a fist. So far, I had taken care of three enemies. I stepped back and glanced behind me.

An Su-hyun had a blank expression on his face. I didn’t need to worry about him striking me in the back. For now. I swung my fist again.

Bam! Bam bam!

There were a total of nine enemies. After taking care of all of them, I leaned against a wall while breathing roughly. Even if I had a technique, it was physically difficult.

“...”

“...”

The two people were looking at me with stunned expressions.

“Cool...” The woman made an admiring sound. I searched their pockets and found 20 coins. An Su-hyun’s eyes shone but there was nothing he could do. The woman’s eyes also flashed.

She was looking at me instead of the coins. “Incredible!” She was the type of woman who caught your eye. She carried a cardigan in her arms while her outstanding body stood out in relief under the short-sleeved polo shirt.

I made An Su-hyun walk another way. And from then on, the woman started to speak earnestly. “I am Yoo Su-jeong.”

“Kim Hee-chul.”

“Do you go to O University?”

“Yes.”

“Are you a boxer? You looked awesome.”

“Nope.” Although I gave short replies, that just made Yoo Su-jeong become more aggressive.

“But what are you doing with your handphone?”

“Drawing a map.”

She was silent for a moment before pulling out her handphone and drawing a map.

“Eh...!” An Su-hyun turned around at the small cry that emerged from Yoo Su-jeong’s mouth.

“What...? Is there something there?”

“Nope. I almost fell down.” She shook her head and An Su-hyun glanced at me.

This was completely... I didn’t respond, but I didn’t try to stop it. He was easier to handle due to the presence of Yoo Su-jeong.

“...Chet.” It was funny that An Su-hyun was handled by Yoo Su-

jeong who claimed not to know him. Thus, we proceeded through the dungeon. Goblins approached us, but they were sparse.

It was a maze but the composition was so simple that it was comparable to the first floor rather than the second floor. Furthermore, none of the boxes from the second floor were spotted.

We found the stairs that An Su-hyun and Yoo Su-jeong came down. Then they found a staircase leading to the 4th floor.

[Stairs. It leads to the 4th floor.]

[Changes in the following floor: Dungeon space has expanded. You can encounter +1 explorer. Monsters below D rank will emerge.]

[Personnel entry restriction 0/2]

Personnel entry restriction? Two people? The other two people's expressions brightened as they saw it. As soon as they turned the corner in front of the stairs, there was a hallway.

It was big. The second floor had a large room with the dummy in it, but this hallway was dozens of times larger. I was able to determine the size due to the torches. There were torches hanging from pillars that were arranged in a circular shape. It was very

clear who lit the torches.

“Grrr...”

“Kyahh...”

The hallway had layered stairs that got lower as they headed to the centre. Goblins were camping in the centre. “Oh my god...”

“Crazy.” Yoo Su-jeong and An Su-hyun cried out.

We could hide behind the pillars and look down undetected, but the sight was enough to cause fear. There were dozens of goblins. Even if they had the combat power of an elementary school student, it was difficult to take care of such large numbers. In addition, there were two superior goblins among them.

[Lime Goblin (Warden). Type: Ajin (Demi-human). Rank E.]

[They lead the tribe's warriors, occupying the stairs near the village and preventing any attacks. Their physical capabilities are right above the workers. However, their ability to use combat tools such as whips can be frustrating and annoying.]

E rank was the same as the dummy. There wasn't just one box beside them, there were seven, no eight boxes. The boxes were all piled up. And there was a staircase.

It was quite different from the existing staircases. There was a geometric pattern around the stairs that had the same style as the wall murals.

[Stairs. It leads to the 4th floor.]

[Unique Staircase - Lime Goblin's Habitat]

“Excuse me... Are you planning to go down the stairs?”

“I will look around.” After replying to An Su-hyun, I led the two of them around the rest of the dungeon. Apart from some goblins that showed up, the rest of the third floor was the same. Some of the other paths only led to dead ends. In the end, we returned to the hallway.

“...”

“...”

An Su-hyun and Yoo Su-jeong’s complexions were pale. The two of them had finally realized something.

[Personnel entry restriction 0/2]

The word ‘safe’ was obviously attached to those stairs. Two out of the three people could go down the stairs. At least one person needed to use the stairs in the hallway.

They had to go through the guarding goblins.

Chapter 9 - Day 3, 3rd Floor Pain

I thought about what was the best method. Honestly, it would be best to eat up everything alone. If I took care of all the monsters without any help then I could gain all the experience and get the boxes.

But I couldn't send the two people away.

There was a large number of goblins. I had a 50/50 chance to succeed alone, but the odds weren't stable. Instead, I chose the middle ground. "Let's go together."

"I-I don't want to. No, I can't go." An Su-hyun was shaking.

"There were two E ranked... That enemy upstairs..."

"I will take care of both E ranks." In fact, it had to be like this. Killing the two E rank goblins would give better rewards, and I wanted them. "And I will allow you to pick one box."

"O-one?"

An Su-hyun stuttered with an absurd expression. I pulled a sword from my inventory. It was the 'Elmer's Dummy Destroyer' that An Su-hyun dropped yesterday.

"That is my..."

"Why is this yours?" I frowned at An Su-hyun who was about to approach. I didn't bring it out to give to him.

"You dropped it. Now it's mine. It isn't just this. Thanks to you, I received the Punching skill. It was easier than I thought to fight against the dummy. The reward was good."

I mixed my words with lies and twirled the sword in front of me.

"I won't prevent you if you go down the safe stairs. Go down right now if you want. It will be a bit riskier, but I'll get one more box. You gave it up. Just like this sword."

"..."

"I wonder what's down on the fourth floor. You don't know what type of person will come down and there might be harsher conditions than these goblins. Will you also whine and try to move onto the next floor?"

"No."

"No what?" I snorted with derision.

"Didn't you come down here yesterday with the expectation of receiving something?" I knew An Su-hyun to a certain extent. He was a type that was 180 degrees different from me, but he also

wasn't satisfied with the reality given to him.

"Until when will you live as a bug crawling up your parents' backs?"

"Be careful..."

"What will you do if I'm not careful? There is no reason for me to care. You are garbage that has no room for improvement." An Su-hyun was silent.

"Then... Give me more boxes."

"No."

"T-There are so many. Are you going to keep all of them to yourself?"

"Yes." It didn't matter if it was appropriate distribution or not, because I was the one making the decision about the distribution. The most important thing was my own survival.

"If you feel wronged then try to do better on the next floor. Wouldn't it be better to obtain one box before going down?"

"..."

[Talent has been acquired.]

[Talent - Persuasion: The ability to persuade others to follow you without violence. Speaking ability will depend on the level. Charisma and logic have slightly increased.]

[Currently it is LV 1. Benefits will open at LV 3.]

An Su-hyun nodded. "...I accept."

"Okay." As long as he was motivated, he would be a help against the goblins to a certain degree.

"I-I'll do it as well." Yoo Su-jeong spoke up.

"You will hunt the goblins?"

"Yes." It was a remark I hadn't imagined her making. Personally, I thought it would be useless. Of course, a woman's body was never weak. They were capable of wielding a blunt weapon just like adult men. However, the important thing was the mental state. She didn't seem to have the mental state to kill something.

"Me too... I understand after listening to your words. If I go down to the next floor then I won't be able to do anything... If you give me a box then I'll be grateful."

"I won't stop you, but if you get in the way or try to interfere then there will be no box."

"Yes, I'll work hard." I beckoned to both of them. I stopped just before the hallway and issued instructions.

"I'll will sneak to the other side using the pillars. Stay here, but as I go to the other side, scream and draw attention." The narrow passage meant the two of them would be able to fight quite a lot of goblins.

It would have been crazy if they tried to lure all the goblins. It was good to fight against the safe stairs. Once they lured enough, I would be able to monopolize the boxes.

"Understood."

"I understand."

[Talent has been acquired.]

[Talent - Leadership: The ability to effectively control and manage people. Eloquence and charm will increase proportionally to the level. Charisma will rise significantly.]

[Currently it is LV 1. Benefits will open at LV 5.]

This one also increased charisma. I left the two and went back to the hallway. I stood on the opposite side of the entrance and waited.

“Ack!” An Su-hyun started shouting. The goblins responded immediately. 1/3rd of them rushed towards the direction of the passage. As I speculated, the two E ranked didn’t move. Rather, they paced to the opposite side.

I waited for 30 seconds. Once the moving goblins were completely uphill, I activated my ability.

Activate. Limiter Release.

All sensation in my body disappeared. I jumped down the stairs, and there was a goblin warden not far away. I ignored the smaller ones and threw a punch with all my strength.

Ujik.

There was the loud sound of facial bones breaking and the goblin warden collapsed. What? Was it the same level as regular goblins? As I was thinking that, something stuck into my neck.

Huk.

I pulled it and found a needle.

It was from the remaining goblin warden. There was a large straw in its hand. It was a [wind gun](#).

(ED: similar to blow dart gun)

“Kyahh!”

“Kuwak!”

The rest of the goblins formed a wall that protected the warden. It was impossible to catch this warden without going through them.

Disable. Limiter Release.

If I wasn't attacking the goblin warden, then there was no need to release the limit and wear out my physical strength. If I turned it off for a while...

“Eu... Ugh!”

[You feel intense pain.]

[You have been hit by the goblin's poison.]

My entire body was in pain, with the worst of it being concentrated in my neck. It was the part that was hit by the needle from the wind gun a little while ago. I looked up at my HP bar.

[Current Balance: 117/123]

[Poison - Pained condition. Pain level: 7.]

There was no decrease in my health, it was a poison that just caused extreme pain. Even so, it was hard not to scream. I thought about it. Should I use Limiter Release?

No. It wasn't free. Endure. Endure. I also had the Pain Tolerance talent. I could do it. I clenched my fist and went to work. Two goblins fell down. I felt a pain flare up on my side. I had been scratched by a goblin's nails.

[Current Balance: 108/123]

“Son of a bitch!” I shouldn’t be hasty. Calmly hold my position. One by one, one by one. There would be a chance to take a breather.

[The level of a talent has risen.]

[Punching LV 2 -> LV 3. Related abilities have increased.]

Puk!

I felt something small pierce my thigh. There was an angle for the wind gun to be fired from behind me? Pain spread around the newly swollen area. Not only did the poison cause pain, it also amplified the previous pain. I could feel it every time a goblin scratched my side.

[Current Balance: 102/129]

[Poison - Pained condition. Pain level: 8.2.]

"Ack! Yak! Yak! Yak! Ack!"

I screamed while swinging my fists. Hold on. Hold on. Hold on. Yes. Think of the talent experience. The experience was causing Pain Tolerance to rise. Once I finished the 14th goblin, I had three rows of nail marks on my thighs but there was a gap in their ranks.

I took care of 25 enemies. At that moment, a needle from the wind gun pierced my chest.

[Current Balance: 74/129]

[Poison - Pained condition. Pain level: 9.3.]

Thanks to the 26th enemy killed, I made it through the gap in their ranks. I focused on the goal.

Every time I knocked down a goblin, the wall surrounding the goblin warden thinned and I could see its face. It seemed to be laughing at me as it held the wind gun.

Kill. I would kill everything.

So let's go. The 44th enemy. A goblin jumped up and bit my shoulder.

“Ahhhhh!!!!”

My flesh was torn as I pulled it off my back. I bit my lip and threw the goblin at its allies. There were two standing between me and my goal. Three enemies left, including the warden.

[Current Balance: 29/129]

My win.

"Kii... Kyahh!"

The panicked warden wielded a whip. It was fast. The whip couldn't be avoided and struck my cheek and chest. The decline in HP was small but the pain was more than I could imagine.

But I didn't stop moving. There were only two enemies left.

Squash!

I took care of the second and caught the flying whip with my bare hands.

[The level of a talent has risen.]

[Pain Tolerance LV 5 -> LV 6. Related abilities have increased.]

[Endurance has exceeded its limit.]

[Willpower has exceeded its limit.]

[Endurance: 12]

[Willpower: 13]

"Is that it, you bastard?" One hand held the whip as I moved closer. I didn't use Limiter Release. There was no need to.

"Kyah..."

I made a fist, and then the warden collapsed. I sat down, all my strength gone. My legs felt like jelly. But what about the passage? What happened to An Su-hyun and Yoo Su-jeong?

The answer came straight away as An Su-hyun walked out from behind the pillar.

"..."

It was like he was looking at a ghost.

I couldn't see myself right now. My whole body was bloody from the cuts and cramping with pain.

"Crazy guy..."

"I'd rather be crazy than a pushover." I said with a grin.

An Su-hyun was holding an ebony club in his hands. He looked at my condition and kept stepping forward. Behind An Su-hyun, the restless Yoo Su-jeong belatedly showed herself.

"E-Excuse me, Su-hyun oppa. It's still too..."

"Shut up! In the end, he isn't so tough." An Su-hyun said honestly and swallowed his saliva.

"I don't intend to kill you."

"Oh? Thank you for that."

"Let's divide the boxes in half." Before I could say anything, he added an excuse. "It is wasn't for me then you wouldn't have been successful. I-I believe that I deserve half... I just want you to admit it. Once again, I don't want to kill you."

"Is that your conscience?"

"What?"

"If I don't give you half then you will kill me. Stop saying such ridiculous words." I laughed and got up from the ground. "The number of boxes given to you is fixed."

It had been one box just minutes ago, but now it had decreased to zero. "Take the girl and descend the stairs."

"Your legs don't even work properly..."

“Activate. Limiter Release.” I said it out loud on purpose. My legs stopped trembling. The agonizing pain was gone and it was like I was in my best condition.

“W-w-what...?!”

“Look at this. You’re stepping backwards again.” If I told the truth? I’d rather have everything. If not, I would have been very angry. I also didn’t like this guy. He was the type of person who chose to give up and die when things became even a little difficult. I formed a fist.

Baduk. A smile spread across my face.

“Once again. Get lost.”

“Ah...”

“Or at least attack... Don’t act so scared and do what you want! This garbage like bastard!!”

The fighting spirit on An Su-hyun’s face disappeared. The hand holding the club dropped down and his body started shaking as he moved backwards.

“Ah... Ohh...”

An Su-hyun reached the area that was right in front of the stairs.

"I have nothing to give you so take the stairs together." Yoo Su-jeong, who had a look of dismay on her face, bowed. She spoke with a small sigh.

"... Really useless." The next moment, blood was strewn across the staircase.

"Kuk...!" An Su-hyun's eyes widened with surprise and he couldn't grasp the situation at all.

"Ahh. A waste."

Her hand was holding a knife that had dug into An Su-hyun's carotid artery. She pulled the knife out of An Su-hyun without any hesitation. Blood gushed out like a fountain and he stared with disbelieving eyes... Yoo Su-jeong paid no attention to him at all.

"I had hoped, but I guess it was too greedy to think about killing Hee-chul ssi. But even so, he was a very pathetic person... Isn't that right?"

Yoo Su-jeong moved backwards towards the safe stairs while smiling at me. It seemed like she wasn't a stupid woman.

Chapter 10 - Day 3, 3rd Floor Surprise

I didn't shout or ask what she was doing. I just measured the distance I would have to run to subdue Yoo Su-jeong.

"Don't worry. I have no intention of fighting with Hee-Chul ssi." The dagger she stabbed into An Su-hyun's neck disappeared from Yoo Su-jeong's hand. Yoo Su-jeong held out her empty palms in the front of her like she wanted to show she meant no harm.

"I knew he wouldn't win, but I didn't think he would look so stupid." She touched An Su-hyun's head with her toes. Even though she cut his throat, the amount of blood that spurted from An Su-hyun's neck was abnormal. An Su-hyun's body rolled down the stairs. Once it stopped, the HP Bar above An Su-hyun was completely empty.

[Out]

Only his cold body was left behind. "Well, bye."

Like it was a signal, she started running. She ran three or four steps towards the staircase in the narrow passage. I was lacking by a few steps. By the time I reached the staircase, Yoo Su-jeong had already stepped onto the safe stairs to the fourth floor and disappeared.

"..."

I turned around.

I approached An Su-hyun to confirm his condition but it was already too late. Even when it was touching the stairs, the body didn't disappear.

"Dammit."

It was the first death I faced, and it was completely gruesome. The light had disappeared from his eyes. He didn't deserve to die just for his sin of being human.

Anyway, I couldn't think about the body any more. I couldn't do anything. Instead, I needed to focus on the things I could do. I lay An Su-hyun back down and went back to the hallway. There was still nothing in the pouches of the goblins except for coins. Then I checked the first goblin warden.

[Crude Wind Gun. Equipment item. Rank F.]

[A primitive wind gun made by drying the hollow stem of a plant. There is no finesse or sincerity. If you don't handle it carefully then it can't be used for more than small shocks.]

[Warden's Needle. Consumption item. Rank D.]

[A tool primarily carried by the wardens of the lime goblins. The strength of the needle itself isn't much, but in the case of a poisoned needle, it has the ability to cause pure pain to the opponent.]

[Applies a pain score of 7 after being poisoned. If the poison overlaps, a pain score of 0.5~1 is added. This decreases by 0.2 per minute.]

There were a total of 10 needles. I headed to the second goblin warden.

[This wind gun can no longer be used.]

I scavenged another seven needles. It subtracted the three that were used on me.

As a result, I had a total of 17 poisoned needles that caused pain. Even if I didn't use the wind gun, I could just prick the opponent with it. I felt a lot of pain, so anybody else without Pain Tolerance would be almost paralyzed.

Or... With this, I could raise the level of Pain Tolerance. This time, I moved towards the boxes.

Pak!

The first box contained a trap. The second box contained three coins.

[Tellan Empire Coin (Silver).]

[An imperial coin that still holds value. It is made of a silver material. It is commonly used among communities or species within the dungeon. It has the same value as 20 bronze coins.]

When would a store where I could use this appear? I smashed the next few boxes. From the fourth box, five porcelain bottles emerged. A foul smell came from the corks covering the opening of the bottles.

[Crude Porcelain Bottle]

[There is no way of knowing the contents. The efficacy won't be known until after it had been drunk or applied.]

...I would drink it right before doing down the stairs. In the fifth box, there were four pieces of paper. When I saw what was on the paper, it reminded me of [woohwangcheongsimwon](#).

[Greenish Brown Pills]

[There is no way of knowing the contents. The efficacy won't be known until after it had been drunk or applied.]

Was I a guinea pig now? Either way... I would try it once. A ring emerged from the sixth box. It was a thin silver ring that females commonly wore. There seemed to be elaborate carvings on it, but there were so many scrapes that it was hard to check the patterns.

[Old-fashioned Ring. Equipment item. Rank D.]

[A tool that promotes sexual attractiveness and was popular among the nobles of the empire centuries ago. At the time, the Imperial Princess used it to gain a lot of money and the Emperor strictly prohibited its use. It is worth quite a bit among collectors. The effect of the artifact seems to have weakened due to the magic patterns being damaged.]

[Charm correction +1. The amount of pheromones emitted to the opposite sex have slightly increased.]

What? It was useless. ...Um. Still, maybe I should go somewhere tomorrow. No... But it couldn't hurt. Um. Well.

The seventh box was a trap. And the long-awaited eighth box. A

book came out. It was old but was made out of luxurious leather with designs on it. I opened it to see strange letters inside. At first glance, it was a narrow font similar to Arabic.

[Old Leather Hardcover Book]

[Information to decrypt language: Knowledge related to the language is required.]

Thus, I got everything I could from the boxes. I lifted one porcelain bottle.

Pong.

As soon as I opened it, a smell similar to rotten eggs stung my nose. I lay halfway on the edge of the stairs. If I became sick or there was something strange, I could just roll down. I closed my eyes and swallowed the contents of the bottle. It felt like drinking the snot from a runny nose.

[Current Balance: 28/129]

[Current Balance: 30/129]

Huh?

I felt good.

[The Lime Tribe's Medicine. Consumption item. Rank E.]

[Drugs made by the lime goblins for first aid. Due to the poor supply and demand in the dungeon, the lime goblins' drugs are one or two steps lower than generic goblin drugs.

[Once the medicine is taken, there is a slight homeostasis and stabilizing effect. 1~3 HP will be recovered every second for 1 minute.]

I was saved.

[Current Balance: 129/129]

Although I had low expectations, being able to fully recover my HP was a tremendous advantage. It could be thought of as having four more lives. If so, what about the pills? With higher expectations than before, I carefully unwrapped a pill and placed it in my mouth.

...This. Sweet? It felt like I was eating a sweet potato soup without the stickiness. The sweetness that spread to my head

quickly made me feel disoriented.

[An unbearable sleepiness has come rushing in.]

Yes, sleepy. But I shouldn't sleep... I closed my eyes.

[Niks Candy. Consumption item. Rank D.]

[The specialty of the Mandel area alchemists. Once chewed, you will be overcome by a sleepiness that can't be resisted. It is only 10 minutes of sleep but the efficiency is better than any sleep you would normally have.]

[There will be 10 minutes of forced sleep. Once you wake up, you can get the same effect as sleeping for 8 hours.]

It was better than I thought. When I read the description, it said that I only lost consciousness for 10 minutes but that wasn't what my body was saying. It felt like I had been sleeping for 8~16 hours.

The areas where the needles hit me were now completely fine. If that was the case, could I use this in reality? It was practical. It was a miracle medicine that could almost double my day. ...How many more things could I get from the next floor?

Before I went down the stairs, I looked at the stairs in the narrow passage. Yoo Su-jeong had gone down these stairs. Then the stairs where An Su-hyun's body was.

Yoo Su-jeong had run away from me. I couldn't give up going down the other stairs just to chase her. Her judgment was right. I would go down the unique staircase. There were many more rewards waiting below.

One day we would meet again on the floors below. Could I kill a person? No, it might not be an important problem. I didn't want to be like An Su-hyun. If I hesitated then I would die before achieving what I wanted. I needed to obtain everything I could get my hands on. Even though the goal was clear, the means was the problem.

I stepped on the stairs. I would clear the way with my own hands.

[3rd floor cleared.]

I opened my eyes in my room... No, it wasn't.

[4th floor. Arrived.]

[A penalty has been applied to the unique stairs. Returning from the dungeon has been put on hold. You skipped one day and will immediately start on the next floor.]

“What?”

“What the!?”

I wasn't the only one who yelled out. I turned my head and locked gazes with another pair of eyes. The place where I was standing now was a room lit up with lights, just like the hallway.

There was a man was in front of a staircase, his body covered in scratches. His age and height seemed to be similar to mine, but his shoulders were wide and his arms were long. At first glance, I could see that he had a well-disciplined body.

There were thick gloves on both hands.

“...”

His eyes were examining me. At first glance, he gave off a strong impression. A so-called ‘gangster image.’ He looked like a person who was never far from violence.

“What are you looking at, you motherfucker.”

I looked weaker than him. He approached me while swearing. Activate. Limiter Release. I raised my gloved hands. Bring it on, I'll smash you.

"What is this?"

As there was a third cry, both of our heads turned in surprise. There was another staircase.

The person was a middle-aged man that was at least 190 cm tall. Tattoos were exposed on his thick forearms. His meaty hands were holding a knife. He looked this way and frowned as he realized the atmosphere.

He looked a little nervous. Three beasts. Everyone was silent as we didn't dare rush carelessly. A suffocating tension filled the room.

However, all three of us were looking at one point in the room. There was one last staircase remaining.

That's right. The room was square. There was one staircase at each of the four corners. Soon, the fourth beast would be coming down the stairs. Like the other three, the person who came down from the third floor would be a beast.

It was the reason why everyone was vigilant. Seconds passed that felt like a long time. The shape of a person appeared on the stairs.

“Eh? This... Kyaaak?!”

As the fourth person made a surprised scream, the other two beasts' eyes widened. A girl in her late teens had showed up. She was wearing the school uniform of a high school in my area.

“Ah, ah, ah... Hello...”

As the weakest creature spoke in a quivering voice, the other two somewhat relaxed. I didn't do such a stupid thing. Although it was just a guess, I felt sure she was the most dangerous predator.

Chapter 11 - Day 4, 4th Floor Separation

Ching.

"Ohh?"

"What the!?" Something rose in the centre of the room. It was an empty glass tube that was approximately two metres tall.

[The total amount of HP reduced in the room will be stored.]

[Once a total of 200 HP is stored, the entrance will open.]

I seemed to be the only one who immediately understood the meaning immediately, but the high school girl and two men cried out a few seconds later.

My HP was 129 points. In other words, I needed to put a person with higher HP than me into a critical condition, or even kill them. If I thought rationally, it was possible to satisfy the conditions without killing anyone. However, I intuitively sensed that someone would be killed.

This was it. The eyes of the man with scratches who I dubbed 'Scratchy', moved nervously. Maybe he was thinking something similar to me.

From appearance alone, the strongest person in this place was the man with the knife. The weakest one was the high school girl. This wasn't a game where the strongest would eliminate the weakest. The middle-ranked people-- I intuitively sensed that Scratchy and I were placed in that group.

"That..."

"This..." Just as we were both about to say something...

"Help me!" The scream of the high school girl caught our attention. She was teary-eyed but I didn't know what she was scared of. Her finger... It was pointed towards me? "H-he raped me."

Huh?

The situation was so surprising that I couldn't even say anything. Tears flowed down the cheeks of the schoolgirl. "On the second floor, we met... H-he said that if I wanted to live... The other person was killed... So, so..."

She was very good. In fact, I'd seen someone being killed on the floor above. Maybe all three of the people here had their hands dirty. Even if I had done such a thing, it wasn't actually a major issue for them. The important thing was that it was a good pretext for a witch hunt.

"This fucking bastard!" Scratchy cried out with an angry

expression as he rushed straight towards me.

Fast.

Was it a technique? Was he an athlete? I hit him with my left fist, but his counterattack struck me in the face.

[Current Balance: 92/129]

One hit had caused this much havoc. The strength of his hit was much greater than I thought. Still, the exchange was successful.

“Ah...?” There was a groan. After his blow, Scratchy started staggering.

[Talent has been acquired.]

[Talent - Hidden Weapon Technique: The ability to use darts and handle hidden weapons. Concentration and dexterity will rise in proportion to your level.]

“T-t-this...” A needle was firmly embedded in Scratchy’s thigh. It was a blow I had been preparing since I saw him being so eager to fight. There was a possibility that he might have experienced the needles upstairs. Thus, I hit him with three needles at once.

"Aaaaaaack!" A scream emerged as he staggered. I hit him in the neck, chest, abdomen and the last one in the face. After using Limiter Release, I accurately punched him five times with all my strength. His HP fell to a critical state instantly.

As Scratchy tried to move his body back, I turned around.

Bam!

My fist hit something iron. I stopped the knife with my fist and was fine. I had been warily watching the other man, so I was able to take action, but I had been worried about whether I could stop the attack or not.

"Don't believe that is the end." The other hand of the middle-aged man caught my neck. He literally lifted me up. "I can't let you eat it all."

Eat? What did that mean? I grabbed his wrist. Did he think it would be that easy? Both legs and my waist. I put strength in my hands and held firmly.

"...!"

'What is this power?' His confusion was apparent on his face. It even surprised me. The middle aged man was strong. I had used Limiter Release but I still couldn't win with strength.

[Current Balance: 89/129]

[Current Balance: 88/129]

Due to the fact that I was fighting beyond my original strength, I was gradually losing HP. I gazed sideways to see the schoolgirl. The bitch was chewing on her fingernails as she watched us.

She seemed to be thinking. I gently twisted the wrist of the hand that was holding the knife. As I held onto the wrist, I forced strength into my leg. But that wasn't the end. I also poured strength into both thighs and kicked upwards at the middle-aged man.

"Ugh!" I kicked his wrist and the man winced, stepping back. At that point, I had 1/6th of my HP remaining. I quickly drank a potion bottle from my inventory. I took out three needles and looked at the girl.

"...Hik!" She stared at me with shocked eyes.

The middle aged man was still recovering. Rather than getting rid of him, I would remove the unknown risk behind me.

Kukukung.

"Ehh?" All of a sudden, the room started shaking. My foot

slipped. It wasn't just the shaking, the floor was tilting!

[200 HP has been stored.]

[Entrance opening.]

The ground kept tilting to the sides. The room was divided into four equal parts, with the floor going down at each corner. Depending on where you were standing, each person could fall in a different direction.

Peeok!

I couldn't stay upright anymore and fell on my butt. I slid down the high slope helplessly, and darkness welcomed me.

I regained consciousness and looked around. On one side of me was a dead end. The other side had a passage. I had fallen into the dead end of a maze.

"Ah, argh..."

A moan was heard from outside my field of view. I took a step and saw Scratchy leaning against a wall. He had fallen with me, while the high school girl and middle-aged man were separate.

Maybe there was only one wall between us.

Still, the pain had diminished over time so Scratchy was barely moving around. He held a bottle in his hand and was bringing it to his mouth: it was the goblin's medicine.

I immediately pushed him against the wall and snatched the bottle from his hand. At that moment, I felt a sting in my side.

“....”

Despite his half-closed eyes, I could see a faint triumph of victory flashing in them. He had pricked me with three needles. This guy obviously also had the warden's needles.

“Eh... What is this?” He had only been acting pathetic.

[Pain Tolerance. LV 6. 339/3200]

I sincerely said thank you. “Thank you. I received experience thanks to you.”

“...”

The victory changed into an expression of despair. “Give me all your items.”

“...?”

“The gloves on your hand and everything you got from the second floor. If you follow my instructions then I will accompany you to the stairs to the next floor.”

I pulled out all the needles I had from my inventory. “Or do you want to lie here and moan a bit more?”

“I-I’ll give it. Here.” He pulled out 14 needles. I also took the three goblin medicines he had remaining. There were some coins and even an unknown bottle.

“Is this a medicine bottle?”

“I don’t know.” I waved the needles in his face.

“I-I really don’t know! Someone else took it and just died.”

“...”

It took me a moment to understand those words. I really wanted to prick him with all the needles and abandon him here but...
“Stand up.”

“Eh?”

“Lead the way. Stop and report to me if you see anything.” I would use him as a shield.

Unlike the dungeon, the corridor was pitch black. In this situation, I wouldn’t be able to see if there was a ranged attack such as the warden’s wind gun.

“Gi... Give me one bottle of medicine. Right now I don’t have much health left...”

“Take the lead instead of saying such nonsense.” After he stood up, I seized the gloves from him.

[Kung Fu Apprentice’s Glove. Equipment item. Rank E.]

I read the explanation, but it didn’t say much other than it protecting my muscles and joints. Instead, I examined the rank. E. Did this mean an ordinary standard?

Monsters or items belong E rank were nothing special and could be found in reality. But once it reached D rank, there were things like the pills that helped relieve fatigue for 8 hours.

E rank was commonplace, it was something that just wasn’t that great. From F rank downwards, the quality was worse than ordinary. From D rank and above, things started to go beyond the

ordinary category. That was an approximation, at least.

“Hey! I-I’m going!” Scratchy shouted at me. I was just about to walk forward when...

Jaengurang!

A bottle flew from outside my field of view, hit Scratchy’s chest and broke. A strange odour spread through the passage. Scratchy started moaning.

“...Eh?” I could finally see the enemies, and there were three of them.

[Lime Goblin (Warrior). Type: Ajin (Demi-human). Rank E.]

[The middle and upper class of the Lime Tribe that monopolizes the majority of the supplies. Due to the extra nutrition, the development of the bones and muscles is different. In the case of warriors, they have the physical ability to fight against adult human men.]

Indeed, they weren’t at all comparable to the small workers and wardens. The bulging belly and strong upper body reminded me of a small gorilla. And... There was one more behind them. I could only see a fuzzy shape in front of me.

Jingle.

It shook something and threw it towards me. The upper body was revealed due to its throwing motion.

[Lime Goblin (Pharmacist). Type: Ajin (Demi-human). Rank D.]

[Responsible for the production of drugs, which could be called the lifeblood of the entire goblin species. The drugs made will vary depending on the traditions and environment in which the material is procured.]

I couldn't let myself be hit by that bottle. I hurriedly turned my body and it flew in an arc and broke behind me. The smell was enough to make my nose protest. What was it?

"Ah, ahh... Ahh..." After being hit by the bottle, Scratch was flopping helplessly on the ground and moaning.

Then the goblin warriors came rushing in, each of them with a rusty knife in their hands.

I plunged forward.

Bam!

I turned on Limiter Release and punched the face of the enemy in the lead. I followed up by striking its neck and chest.

“Kyahh...” Was it still standing? Although it was obviously in pain, the goblin didn’t collapse. Then another one aimed at my side. I avoided the swinging knife and smashed it in the face.

It wasn’t an easy fight, but the narrow passage worked to my advantage. It had allowed me to see the bottle flying towards me and avoid it.

Once one of the goblins couldn’t fight properly, the other two were quickly joined his misery. At that moment, the goblin pharmacist disappeared out of view.

“Kyah!”

I heard the sound of fleeing feet; It was running away. Maybe it lost all the bottles that it was holding. Either way, I soon got rid of the goblin warriors and then it was time to chase the pharmacist.

“It hurts! Hurts!” I looked back at the scream that reminded me of a child crying and was shocked. It hadn’t even been one minute. What had happened in that time?

Scratchy was a bloody mess. Eyes. Nose. Ears. Mouth. Blood was pouring from every visible hole. There were two bottles on the floor. Was he hit by the one I avoided?

“Hurts... P-please help me, medicine...” But there was nothing I could do, so I turned my back on the crying person. He deserved to die.

“It hurts! Mother! Mother!”

...Dammit. I turned back towards Scratchy. There was only one thing I could give him, but I was reluctant to do it. I turned Limiter Release back on and gathered strength in my fist.

Then I put all my weight into it as I punched downwards. It felt like a watermelon breaking open.

[Talent has been acquired.]

[Talent - Murder: The damage given, emotional control and karma will increase according to the level. Willpower and charisma have slightly increased.]

It was a talent that I had expected. ...I just hadn't wanted to obtain it like this. However, I hadn't thought that more messages would pop up.

[All the talents and experience of the loser will belong to the winner.]

The notifications filled my view.

Chapter 12 - Day 4, 4th Floor Drug

[The level of a talent has risen.]

[Punching Lv3 -> Lv5. Related abilities have increased.]

[Compulsion Lv1 -> Lv3. Related abilities have increased.]

[Murder Lv1 -> Lv2. Related abilities have increased.]

[Reflexes has exceeded the limit.]

[Reflexes: 11]

After killing Scratchy, more records of my history in the dungeon came up.

[Talent has been acquired.]

[Talent - Deception: The ability to deceive another person will increase according to the level. The insight, planning and emotional adjustment abilities have slightly increased.]

[Deception. LV 2. 144/200]

[Talent - Taunt: The ability to make the opponent lost their calm will rise according to the level. Eloquence has slightly increased.]

[Taunt. Lv2. 23/200]

[Planning has exceeded the limit.]

[Insight has exceeded the limit.]

[Planning: 11]

[Insight: 11]

Once no more notifications appeared, I got to my feet. I wouldn't let myself be eaten. I finally understood the words of the man.

If Scratchy had died by my hands, his talent would have flowed into me. The man with the kitchen knife probably knew this. "This is completely... A battle royale."

I smiled as I gazed into the darkness. I had been prepared to kill. Even so, I hadn't thought about always killing my opponents. The 'Persuasion' talent existed, so I had thought about solving some

things through intimidation or a conversation.

But if the system was like this then things were different. If I killed instead, then wouldn't I get the talents of that person? Anybody who knew this would try to kill others if they had a chance.

There would be no conversation. It was the same with negotiations and deals. Who would do such ineffective things? It was impossible for faith to be established.

I needed to be prepared. From now on, there would be no self-defense.

I moved in the direction that the goblin pharmacist had escaped to. I wanted to encounter someone else after gaining Scratchy's strength, but the fourth floor was quite spacious. The goblin pharmacist had thrown bottles. Scratchy had suffered greatly from only two bottles. If I could obtain them, then I would gain an advantage when fighting others.

[The level of a talent has risen.]

[Cartography. Lv4 -> Lv5. Related abilities have increased.]

[Opening benefits received from reaching LV 5.]

[Technique - Mental Image: A technique that allows you to

record images and letters on a mental piece of paper. Only geniuses are born with this ‘talent’, but a few are able to acquire the technique through effort.]

[No level. Concentration, descriptive power, planning, the range and speed of drawing in proportion to spatial perception and the duration have increased.]

What was this? As soon as I thought about it, letters were drawn in my head.

[What is this?]

“... Uhat.”

Normally when visualizing words or pictures in my head, they would disappear after a few seconds. But this was like a piece of paper actually appeared in front of me. Even if I shook my head and tried to erase it, the image was still vivid.

I drew all types of complex shapes. After a minute, they all remained intact... Then what would happen if I tried to draw a map like this?

[Cartography. Lv5. 2/1600]

It worked. This was a remarkable advantage.

So far, my hands were always on my cell phone when moving through the dungeon. I would have to quickly put my cell phone away when a monster emerged.

Now that wasn't necessary anymore. My hands were free! I could respond more quickly. I raised my hands into a combat stance and prepared for any bottles that could come flying. One step forward. Another step.

[Talent has been acquired.]

[Talent - Stealth: The ability to walk covertly, concentration and agility will rise according to your level.]

I walked around for 20 minutes, and my stealth was close to reaching level two. Then I stiffened as I heard a scream from outside my field of view.

It was a scream-- A woman's scream. I walked for a while and light started to appear in front of me. There was a curve in the path that I peeked around, trying to stealthily see the sights that stretched out before me.

Just like the hallway last time, the source of light were torches.

There was a village in a wide space, with conical tents and goblins scattered around them.

The screams were coming from there. I had to pass through the area that the scream came from anyway. I moved my head slightly and shouted as hard as I could.

“KYAH?”

“Kyak!” The goblins among the tents reacted. I immediately pulled back. My fists were waiting in front of the curved path. Within a few seconds, the first victim popped out from around the corner.

“Kik?” My fist slammed straight into its face.

Bakak.

The hit made the goblin stumble backwards and become entangled with the ones behind it.

The terrain was good. The curve of the narrow passage was to my advantage. No matter how many goblins came at me, only one or two could attack at a time-- and there was no need to worry about things thrown from a distance.

The only thing left was for me to punch without making any mistakes in my timing.

"Pant... Pant...!" I panted harshly as the corpses of the goblins came up to my knees when everything was finished. I moved my head past the curve and yelled again.

No more goblins came out. I walked between the tents and looked carefully in each one. There was nothing. Even if there were some boxes, only japtjem of E rank or less appeared.

"Ahh!"

"...!" The screams stopped for a while before starting again. But unlike earlier, the screaming sounded strange. I passed through the tents.

At the end of the tents and near another passage leading to a big and colourful tent. I went inside, then stiffened for a moment.

"Kyak?" I was looking at the back of a goblin pharmacist.

It was holding the handle of a pulley and trying to raise something so it would be 'hanging' off the ground. It wasn't holding a bottle in its hand. I immediately extended my fist.

Kung.

Once the goblin died, the 'thing hanging' fell to the ground. I looked at it... No, I was looking at a person.

“Hi... Ugh...” The high school girl was naked and groaning on the ground. It would have been hard to recognize her if her face hadn’t been mainly left alone. The school girl smelt of medications. Had she been experimented on?

There was a funnel in her mouth. There were already many empty bottles rolling around. At a glance, all the blood vessels in her body had been poisoned and her limbs were spasming.

“...Ah.” As the funnel moved inside her mouth, I could see that a section of her tongue had been cut. This was the cause behind the different screams. Her eyes were bleary with pain as she looked at me. Astonishment crossed the pain-filled face.

“Eu, euuuuh...!” Her body wriggled desperately. I took one step towards her.

“Ple... se... P-please...”

“What are you saying?”

“Hah... Don’t do i... Don’t...”

It wasn’t ‘help me’ but ‘don’t do it.’ What shouldn’t I do? It seemed she was conscious of her nakedness. She raised her knees and used both hands to cover her groin. I didn’t care about her nakedness.

She thought I would do something. The motions were something she did unconsciously. Tears formed in her eyes as she begged.

"Please... Please..."

"...."

I thought about tearing her apart. To be honest, there was still some anger remaining. Being framed for rape was a very disgusting experience. The schoolgirl still had a lot of HP left, but she was paralyzed and couldn't move her body.

If I wanted, I could make her feel pain until she died. It was a shame that a woman absolutely didn't want to go through. I approached her and knelt down.

"Close your eyes."

"Hi..."

"I will kill you. But I won't do anything shameful." Her eyes gazed at me. I raised a fist. "I'll finish it as painless as possible."

Opportunity shouldn't be wasted. Not only would it take time, but I was about to take her life. It was the most precious thing for a human. No matter how much I was filled with greed, I didn't desire anything else from her.

“So... Close your eyes.”

“....” Tears flowed down as the schoolgirl closed her eyes. Fear? No, it was subtle, but it felt different. Relief... Maybe it was remorse.

“S... Sorr... Really... Really sorr...” I accepted the apology as I formed a fist.

Jaengurang.

Wuk.

I was in shock for a moment. My whole head felt wet. Fragments of broken glass feel to the ground.

I turned to look, and there was a goblin pharmacist at the entrance of the tent. There was apparently one left, but there was nothing wrong with my body.

I immediately turned and rushed to the entrance as I tackled the goblin.

“Kyakyak!”

I struck the back of its head. Two hits. Three hits. The floor was soaked with the blood of the goblin.

Blood? Why was I bleeding? Ah, a nosebleed. My body started wobbling. I raised my hand from the ground. Nose, mouth and eyes. Blood dripped on the floor, escaping from every hole on my face.

Activate. Limiter Release.

The dizziness didn't disappear. I tried to stand up, only for my head to hit the ground.

[Current Balance: 115/140]

[Poison - Bleeding/ Nerve paralysis. Health is reduced by one every second.]

No, I still had a lot of HP left.

This is... Too much.

...

...

Something was put between my lips. My eyes couldn't open so I

had no way of knowing what it was. I just knew that a bitter liquid was being poured into my mouth.

“Dri... You should drink it al...” But what was it? ...No, before that. Who? But the questions didn’t emerge from my mouth as I lost consciousness again.

My eyes opened, and I sat up. I was inside the goblin tent. It was the tent where I found the schoolgirl. I turned to look, but the place where the schoolgirl had been was empty.

“...Ah.” There was a little surprised noise. I looked back and saw the schoolgirl. She was fine.

... Of course, she was naked but that was all. She was standing on her own two feet and watching me. All the poisoned blood vessels and wounds were gone.

“Excuse me...”

Her mouth only opened slightly but I was certain. Her severed tongue had grown back again. “Hey. What are you?” I frowned and approached with clenched fists. I knew the situation. I didn’t know what she was, but the girl had fully recovered from her wounds. She was the one who poured something down my throat.

But the question was why she did it. If she killed me then she could get everything. “What are you up to? If you don’t answer...”

"It doesn't matter if you kill me."

Eh?

"...Ah, no. I mean that it is no use if you kill me right now... That... So... I want to stay here a bit more..." The girl stammered like she realized what strange things she was saying. "First of all, r-receive this." She handed over a bag full of bottles.

"T-they are all safe. I've tried it."

I really didn't know what was going on.

Chapter 13 - Day 4, 4th Floor Monster

Her name was Yang Su-jin.

Technique - Healing Factor.

This was the technique she gained from defeating the 'Regeneration Tree' on the second floor and eating its fruit. "It was a dry tree so I wondered if it would work but..."

She took out a lighter from her pocket. A high school girl was smoking-- it was amazing. "The speed is slow but if my head is fine, I won't die..."

The problem was that there was even more. If she was overpowered, the regeneration would proceed at a slower rate. She wouldn't die, but she wouldn't gain any additional strength.

After fighting and being defeated, she'd revived and the goblins became deeply interested in her. They had dragged her back to the tent where she was hung on the pulley and the goblin pharmacist poured all types of drugs into her mouth.

"I didn't think it was too painful while I was being force-fed... I discovered a new talent. 'Identification of ingredients'... If I eat or apply anything then I will know the exact ingredients."

"Stop there. What's your conclusion?" The more she spoke, the more it sounded like she was saying 'kill me because I have this.'

“My regeneration is not a talent but a technique.”

“...So?”

“Eh... Therefore you can’t absorb the technique if you kill me.” How did she know that? Yang Su-jin looked at me with glowing eyes. ...Of course, the only things that popped up in the message were ‘talents and experience.’ The only person I killed was Scratchy. I didn’t know what type of techniques he had.

“How do you know?”

“... Both people I killed on the previous floors had techniques.” She spoke in a somewhat depressed voice.

“They were cheap even when dying... Well, I don’t care what you think. Anyway... I will definitely be useful. Especially when it comes to drugs.” ... Assuming that the story she told me was 100% true, her words weren’t wrong.

The poison inflicted on me by the goblin warden had caused pain. What if I was poisoned and had no antidotes? Or there was an antidote, but I needed to actually ‘eat’ it for it to work. In order to do that, resilience was needed-- the ability to recover from even the most harmful drugs.

“If you don’t believe me, I’ll give you whatever drugs or items are found. I will leave you my share of monsters as well. Just let me

follow behind you.”

“What for?”

“You saved me. I want to do this.”

“I didn’t save you. I tried to kill you with my own hands.”

“It doesn’t matter.” Yang Su-jin put down the pile of drugs I didn’t take and folded her hands together. “... Anyway, you didn’t do anything to me and tried to get me ‘out’. Even if I die here, I won’t actually die...”

“...?”

What? I barely refrained from reacting to the information that popped out of her mouth.

“Oppa... Ah, you’re older than me... Can I call you Oppa? Oppa, I’m not garbage.”

“It is a good idea, but I’m not a guardian you can hide behind.”

“Once again, I don’t care if you kill me.” She took a step towards me.

“I don’t want a guardian. If you have any unknown medicine

then you can feed it to me. If I can't die, then can't you use me as a shield or something? As mentioned earlier, you can have as many items and monsters as you like. This dungeon, a lot of things can be acquired just by wandering around."

"..."

I thought for a moment and then spoke. "I want to ask you one thing-- you're fine right now. You might be helpful to me or you might be trash..."

But the fundamental question still remained: why didn't she kill me? After all, it would be enough if she took my talents and went through the dungeon alone. Was she thanking me for trying to save her from endless pain? Or saying that she wasn't garbage?

It was a pessimistic view of the world, but I believed it despite her youth. In the first place, she was a person who framed me for rape.

"...I am scared."

"The dungeon?"

"The experiences here... To be honest, I'm not afraid to fight with monsters or get hurt anymore. No matter how deep it is... It isn't as severe as what I've experienced." Her eyes became nervous. "But... Meeting other people here, and what I did to Oppa... I don't want to keep suffering like this."

"Your suffering won't stop just because you follow me."

"I-I don't want to be alone. When I am alone, my actions when encountering others ... I want to become a better person in here... I really feel like if I go with you..." She was crying as she talked.

I didn't question her anymore-- there was no need to. I fully understood her story. In short, it was for the sake of her psychological stability. She had killed two people on the previous floors. I didn't know what happened but it was double the number of people I murdered. The psychological burden was large...

It was a story I could sympathize with. To summarize... If she wanted to keep exploring the dungeon, then bad actions would be required. This would continue into the future, but there was a psychological burden that came with being alone. Maybe she was being selfish. To me though, it gave her more credibility than before.

"Sure."

"Huh?"

"You will keep the potions, but you will need to take care of me with the antidotes. The monsters and items are all mine."

"...!" Her teary face brightened. "I-I will. Do you want the items and coins that I have? I have a talent..."

She stopped speaking for a moment. "... Excuse me, are you pitying me?"

"No? Why are you asking?"

"Ah... Just now, I got a new talent..."

"What was it?"

"I-Induce Pity... My charm and eloquence have slightly increased..."

"..."

[Far Vision Pendant. Equipment item. Rank D.]

[A required equipment for the Leng Plateau hunters, it has a spell that enhances vision. It is difficult to reveal its function in a dark dungeon, but the darkness seems to have lightened a little bit.]

[When worn, vision +1. Your field of vision in the dungeon will increase by 1.5 metres.]

In addition, there were five silver and 107 copper coins. There were six of the goblin's medicines, as well as various detoxifying drugs, including the antidote to the 'Grey Malice' drug that the goblin pharmacist tried to kill me with.

These were the items I received from Yang Su-jin. She proved it by eating the 'Grey Malice' and then its antidote. It was the same for the other detoxifying drugs. I hadn't experienced it myself so it was still an unknown potion, but once I tasted it, I recognized it as the same potion she'd fed me earlier.

"Hum, hum hum hum." Yang Su-jin hummed as she hopped between the goblin tents. I was gathering all types of miscellaneous things from them, empty vials, tongs, pliers...

[You don't know the language of the goblins so you can't decipher this.]

Those words popped up whenever I looked at pieces of paper with scribbles on them. There were a few E rank items but most of the stuff was garbage.

"This is it. The goblin pharmacists looked at this scroll and made something. So maybe I can do something if I look at it. I will do it." She brought the issue up before I even asked. Was she doing this on purpose to get rid of my tension? She originally had that type of character.

"... Let's leave."

"Yes!"

We entered the passage beyond the big tent. "Is there at least one more space like this?"

"Yes. This isn't where I came from." There was one more type of goblin that knocked Yang Su-jin out. "They're big. That uncle that was in the room with us before... They're probably bigger than him. Lots of muscle."

"Rank?"

"D. That... In the old movies. Ah, Rambo! They have the body like that main character and have small bottles hanging from their belts. They kept drinking from the bottles."

I wondered if it was some type of doping. Maybe I could raise my stats if I got my hands on it.

"Excuse me, Oppa."

"What?"

"If you have a cell phone... Here." Yang Su-jin held out her cell phone. There was a map drawn on the screen. "You can obtain a

new talent this way.”

“I know.”

“Huh?” I knew a bit more about it than she did. I kept silent and didn’t answer Yang Su-jin’s confused look. I would kill her if I saw anything the least bit suspicious. No matter how young she was, I wouldn’t accept everything at face value.

The passage was long. 30, no 40 minutes. After defeating a few goblins, we arrived at a second village. I started to understand the shape of the fourth floor. It was a swirl. If we kept going straight then we would eventually reach the centre. The goblin village was located in the middle of it.

“Eh?” Yang Su-jin exclaimed. I was also surprised. The camp in front of me was shattered. The tents were torn and there were goblin corpses everywhere. It seemed like they had been cut by something, probably the man with the knife.

“T-that is it.” Yang Su-jin pointed to the body of a goblin leaning against the wall. It was certainly bigger than me, but there were no bottles on its body. I could only see the belt that had previously held the bottle.

I touched the body to check for warmth. It was cool so the fight had been a while ago. “How long has it been like this?”

“One... A few hours?” Dammit.

I screamed at Yang Su-jin who had gone to see the tents. "Come along, quickly!" I rushed through the dungeon at almost full speed. Thanks to the faster speed, we arrived at the next camp in five minutes.

But this place was already demolished. The tents were destroyed and all the enemies were dead. The man with the knife had already gone ahead. This wasn't good.

I had started from the very end of the swirl. Once I saw the location where Yang Su-jin had fallen, the positions where we all fell down weren't that different. But Yang Su-jin was captured and tortured, and I feel unconscious for approximately an hour.

If Kitchen Knife moved properly without losing the path then we would keep chasing him, only following the trail of Kitchen Knife. I hurriedly moved to the next camp. This time, there was another huge goblin at the entrance. It was also wearing a belt without the bottle.

"This is a little... It is cruel." Cruel? It was much more meaningful than that. The corpses of the goblins were much more gruesome compared to the ones in the first and second village. The cuts were exactly the same but the depth was different. Most of the bodies were half mutilated, as though Kitchen Knife had enjoyed it.

The doping potion-- it was potent enough to make the small goblins have a huge physique. I didn't know what would have if a

190cm tall person took it. Especially the amount that the two goblins were carrying.

Goose bumps formed along my body. Maybe he had already cleared the fourth floor... And he might be waiting for us. Still, I had no choice but to head for the end.

"There is still the antidote." I turned to see Yang Su-jin standing in front of a tent. It was the tent of the goblin pharmacist. Every camp had one.

"What?"

"That person, he didn't take the antidote. The goblin pharmacist was holding it. There are many things I don't know, but I'm certain this is the antidote."

Certainly, I had seen the power of the poison that Scratchy died from. If Kitchen Knife had avoided the bottles then he wouldn't know how dangerous the goblin poison was. So maybe I could kill Kitchen Knife with that poison.

"Here." Yang Su-jin handed me a poison bottle. I hadn't said anything but she guessed the situation. There was a moment of silence before we proceeded to the next passage.

After walking for a while...

The walls on either side of us disappeared and we emerged into a

wide space. It was a large space, like the camps, but there were no torches. However, it wasn't like the last room on the first floor. I walked along the passage but didn't see the end. Only a narrow area was revealed within my field of view.

“...”

I swallowed my saliva and could feel Yang Su-jin sticking closely to my back. I didn't pull away.

[Stealth. LV 2. 5/200]

Eh? After gaining the talent and reaching level two, the experience hadn't gone up no matter how slowly I walked. Now, through this method...

Kung.

With the sound, 'it' came into my sight. It was approaching this way.

Kung.

I immediately moved away. It responded as soon as it heard footsteps.

“Huh?” My miscalculation was that I was wearing the pendant received from Yang Su-jin. In other words, I have a wider field of view than her. Thus, her reaction was too late.

“Avoid it!” I belatedly yelled, but it was useless. Yang Su-jin stiffened and couldn’t move as ‘it’ came into her sight.

Buuuong.

The knife moved through the air with a harsh sound. Yang Su-jin couldn’t even scream as her upper and lower body was separated.

‘It’ had a body that was almost three metres tall. Hundreds of thousands of blood vessels were showing up dark pink against its skin, and there was a dark aura around it. Its facial muscles were swollen so much that the eyes and nose weren’t visible. The knife in its hand looked like a baby toy and I wouldn’t have known it was Kitchen Knife if it wasn’t for the tattoos.

[Park Jong-gyu. Type ??. Rank ???.]

[A gang member. His inner desires made him recognized as a dungeon explorer, and he was attracted to the ‘Goblin Spice’ that promotes abnormal development of the body.]

[Repeated overdoses has removed reason from his body and the synergy with his inherent desires had created an unprecedented change.]

[Unique Talent - No.005. Atlas has awakened.]

[Named Monster.]

"I think I'm going crazy." I held the bottle in my hand.

Chapter 14 - Day 4, 4th Floor

The thrown bottle hit him exactly in the middle of the face.

“Kuoh?” A noise that wasn’t human emerged from his mouth. He sounded like a pig had inhaled helium.

“That...!”

Kung.

He knelt down, dropping the knife as he covered his face with his hands.

“Kuwaaaaah!” A tremendous roar assailed my ears. I turned Limiter Release off and ran forward to punch him in the face.

Crunch.

The sound came from my fist hitting his face. It was obviously the correct posture for a punch but electricity was transmitted through my wrist. He was hard as a brick. Maybe even harder than that.

“Guah!” He swung his arm. The back of his hand hit my belly and it felt like my stomach and intestines had been turned upside down. I literally bounced back.

“Kuooh... Kuoh...” I shook my head and got up. There was blood pouring down his face. Nevertheless, his body wasn’t paralyzed. I needed more poison.

I started searching. Despite the pendant, my field of view was smaller because my eyes were narrowed. I took careful footsteps and was able to find Yang Su-jin.

She was alive. Her eyes were closed and her mouth shut as she surprisingly endured the pain of having her upper body cut off. Indeed, this was her regeneration ability. From her severed upper body, a new lower body could be seen growing. Still, it was quite strange to see the legs of a 5~6 year old growing out of her.

...Well. It was an urgent situation so I approached Yang Su-jin. She breathed out and said.

“I’m okay.”

“Ah...” Her eyes were touched as she stared into my eyes. ...I wouldn’t talk about coming to get the drugs. Instead I used my hands to open her mouth and took out a medicine bottle. I was pouring the second bottle in her mouth when Yang Su-jin suddenly turned pale.

I looked up before Yang Su-jin could speak. That person was towering above us, on the verge of throwing a punch. I reflexively kicked Yang Su-jin out of the way.

A fist hit my left shoulder. All sensations in my shoulders disappeared.

“...Uck!” I staggered and tried to grab a bottle, but his other hand grabbed my neck. I was lifted up by my throat. In that state, he grabbed my shoulder. It was the side where I had lost all sensations. No, it was my misunderstanding that I lost all sensations.

Jiik, jiiiik.

“Aaaaack!” My shoulder was being pulled, just like one would remove a chicken leg from a chicken. I was barely able to retain consciousness. I threw the bottle in my hand with all my strength but...

“Kik.”

He moved his head slightly and the bottle fell to the ground behind him.

“Kiaaaahahah.” Was it laughter? He put my torn arm in his mouth and started chewing. No, he wasn’t chewing but just pushing it in. He was eating my arm.

No, now wasn’t the time to worry about that. He swallowed from my hand to my shoulder in an instant and smacked his lips like he was satisfied. Then he swapped hands with the one holding my neck.

He wanted to tear the rest of my limbs off like I was a chicken.

I felt like I was dying as the pain of having my limbs pulled off engulfed me. My vision became blurry as I slowly lost consciousness...

Jaengurang.

Suddenly, there was the sound of something breaking and I was dropped. After dropping me, the guy looked back to see that he was soaked due to the bottle that hit him.

"A-Are you okay?" I couldn't see it but it was Yang Su-jin who threw the bottle.

An additional two or three bottles flew through the darkness and hit his chest. No. The location was wrong. Although he was groaning, he was still moving at his fastest speed.

It had to be in the middle of the face or directly on the body... I lifted myself up.

[Current Balance: 54/140]

My hand touched something on the ground. It was the bottle that

missed before. I grabbed it while still feeling the agony of my missing limb. The bottle was a little cracked but the contents were still fine.

“Kyak!”

I could hear Yang Su-jin’s scream from outside my field of vision. And at that moment. Kung. A sound.

Kung. Kung. Kung.

I held the bottle in my mouth and moved forward. I could see his back. He was hitting the ground with his fist. It was the sound of the guy hitting Yang Su-jin’s flesh. I gritted my teeth as I was reminded of my one-armed state, almost breaking the bottle.

One step. Two steps. I put as much weight as possible into my leg as I kicked between his legs.

“...!!” There was no screaming, but I could definitely feel the response in his body. Also, his genitals weren’t as hard as his face.

One step again. My hand hit his genitals. I hit him so hard that my HP was reduced by 14 points.

“Kiiiiik!” The guy stumbled and slipped on the pieces of Yang Su-jin’s body. His head literally slammed against the ground. Yang Su-jin, nice assist!

The bottles that Yang Su-jin held were scattered on the ground. I grabbed as many as I could hold in one hand, along with the one in my mouth.

The guy's hands were holding his groin. I opened his mouth and poured the bottles in my hand down his throat.

"Keok..!" A hand was raised and he threw me away. I was thrown back but all the bottles in my hand were already gone. In fact, I didn't have a hand at all. I had shoved my hand with the bottles down his mouth, and the tightening of his throat was so strong that it tore my wrist off.

However, all the drugs had definitely entered him. The drug was immediately effective.

"Keok! Ukukuk! Uck!" He never got up again.

A tremendous amount of blood poured out from his eyes, nose, mouth and even genitals. It poured out so much that it almost seemed like a broken pipe.

[Unique talent has been acquired.]

[Unique Talent - No.005. Atlas: Your body will become stronger, leading to a desire to oppress others through violence.]

[But always keep this in mind. The more power you have, the greater the weight your body will have to carry.]

[Increases the growth rate of physical talents by four times. The effects of Talent - Suppression are being recalibrated.]

[Muscle strength has exceeded the limit.]

[Health has exceeded the limit.]

[Reflexes has exceeded the limit.]

[Muscle strength: 11]

[Health: 11]

[Reflexes: 12]

I didn't gain any other talents apart from Kitchen Knife's unique one.

I guess... It was because he was no longer human. At the beginning of the fight, words had surfaced stating that he was a monster. I looked at the corpse that shrank like a popped balloon and turned away.

Yang Su-jin was finely chopped. Every part of her body, including her arms and legs, looked like they had gone through a blender. Her regeneration ability could be called the best. Even so, it was impossible for her to survive such a horrible thing.

"...Thank you."

I bowed to her remains. Her talents didn't allow her to fight, but I wouldn't have been able to win this without her.

Duk.

Um? There was the sound of something rolling around outside my field of view.

I took one step.. Oh my god. It was a head. Her eyes were closed but new flesh was growing from her neck. This caused the head to move and make sounds.

I sat down next to Yang Su-jin's head. As her neck and clavicles regenerated, her eyes opened. Was it to look at me? The mouth moved but there was no sound because she didn't have any lungs.

"Good job."

"..." She was a little dazed. Then Yang Su-jin smiled brightly. I frowned.

"Don't smile, you look terrible right now."

We moved a little more and a space with pillars emerged. There were warm lamps above our heads. The pillars were spaced at intervals of 10 metres.

Yang Su-jin's lighter played an active role here. By walking around a few pillars, we could light up the entire space.

"..."

It was an unbelievable sight. The overall area was similar to the third floor hallway without the stairs. But there were no goblins. There were dozens of tents lined up, as well as wood and stone structures. Everything was soaked with blood from the bodies of goblins.

"Wow, that guy did all of this..." Yang Su-jin muttered as she examined the corpses. There were at least eight huge goblins. However, none of them had their potions. At some point, that guy only become filled with the desire to drink more potions.

"It seems like he couldn't find what he was looking for. So he made a mess..." Yang Su-jin stared at me.

[Current Balance: 121/170]

[A bleeding state. Health will decrease by 5 every minute.]

Blood was dripping from my missing arm and wrist, as the wounds weren't easy to heal. I had medicine to recover my health, but I couldn't stay longer.

As we continued to light the pillars, all areas of the space became visible. The staircase was on the far end of the room. The goblins had built a small altar-like structure on the wall behind the stairs.

[Stairs. Goes to the 5th floor.]

[Relaxation/Exchange is available at the next staircase.]

"It doesn't state how many people we can meet." Yang Su-jin mentioned a pretty important point but I was looking a bit upwards. There was a decorated altar behind the stairs.

Light was leaking from the small house shape at the top. Lamp? But the light was a little different. I kicked the altar. There was a loud sound and the identity of the light was revealed.

Alphabet... I had that thought, but the letters had different shapes.

[Talent - Goblin: Runes containing the essence of the goblin species. Explorers who touch the runes will obtain various characteristics that could be called the identity of the species. There are no limitations on the type of runes that can coexist with each other and there are runes with advantages and disadvantages. However, once a rune is taken, it can't be removed by ordinary means.]

[There will be a 20% compensation effect on the subtlety, concentration and dexterity abilities.]

[There is a 20% compensation effect on the talents Hidden Weapon Technique and Stealth.]

[The success rate of manufacturing various chemicals and high quality products will increase.]

[There is a 10% reduction in physical strength and health.]

I read the words carefully and looked at Yang Su-jin. "Uh, what i...s it?"

"You should take this." Yang Su-jin reacted with surprise because she hadn't been expecting it.

"Really? Why should I take this? Really?" It wouldn't hurt to

have more subtlety and concentration, but the 10% reduction in physical strength and health was quite a bit. This was a tool of the goblins, but I didn't need to throw it away.

Yang Su-jin touched the runes while I stood closer to the wreckage of the collapsed towards. I hadn't realized when the altar was still standing. There was something engraved on the wall behind the altar. I kicked the debris in order to see more of the wall.

Rattle.

The wall moved.

[Welcome!]

“Kyak!”

“Heok!”

[Depadora Salesman - Vo23 Type Golem. Rank C.]

[The Depadora sales golem that sets up various branches in famous dungeons to sell miscellaneous goods to adventurers.]

[It doesn't have much strength itself, but the protective magic of the store is hard to pierce.]

In short, it was a dummy made of stone. The voice seemed to be coming from a speaker-like device attached to the neck, not the mouth.

[This is the 427th store of the Depadora Commerce Company...]

Even without the prattling on, I was able to understand that the space inside the wall was a store. The area was approximately five pyeong wide and the shelves were practically barren.

[I am sorry to tell you that this branch has not received payment for our products for 14 years and 32 days. There are hardly any items remaining.]

There were just four items.

[An Introduction to the Old Language of Tellan. A book item. Rank F.]

[Introduces the official language of Tellan. It looks quite old.]

It was a decrepit book.

[Old Explorer's Cloth Bag (Small). Equipment item. Rank F.]

[Made for explorers. Although it is a handmade product, the quality isn't that good. It seems like the durability had weakened considerably over many years.]

[Outside of the dungeon, you can put things in the bag, place the bag in your inventory and bring it into the dungeon.]

There were two of the similarly worn bags. And then there was one small ring with a red jewel embedded in it.

[Salamander's Ring. Equipment item. Rank D.]

[An item created to support non-magical warriors, the power of fire is sealed within the ruby.]

[You can cast the Fireball spell 35~40 times without any fire magic. Be careful not to damage the ruby.]

I pulled out all the coins that I had. After going through this floor, I had 20 silver coins and 325 copper ones. Since one silver coin was equal to 20 copper, that was 36 silver?

"How much is the ring?"

[The ring is 35 silver! Ah, I can give you each bag for five silver and the book for one silver!]

In fact, there was no need for the bags. Even if I could bring things in from outside world, the emergency medicines found here were better. I didn't know where I could get a gun even if I could bring it in. Even if it was D rank, a ring that could shoot fire was much better.

"Then the ring and the book..."

...Wait.

[Yes! Then pay...]

"No, wait. Wait a minute! Please wait." I thought for a moment before changing my words. "Give me the book and two bags."

"Aren't you buying the ring? It looks great..." Yang Su-jin asked

but I had already finished paying. I had almost made a crucial mistake. The reason I continued to explore the dungeon wasn't to fight to survive.

No, it was to ultimately succeed in reality. These bags could be the answer.

[4th floor cleared.]

I headed straight for the library.

Chapter 15 – Day 5, 5th Floor

It was fortunate that the 4th day was a weekend. I had skipped the study group without any explanation, so the only excuse I could give retroactively was that I was in too much pain to have gone. I had a simple dinner and went back home. As I was walking back, I heard a sound in the alleyway next to the house.

“...!” It was An Su-hyun–A person who I had seen die with my own eyes. But that wasn’t the reason for my surprise. It was because he was holding a broomstick that I never once saw him use before.

The building management had always been the responsibility of his parents. Yet now the front yard was immaculately swept and the garbage space was neatly organized.

Even the empty bottles were arranged for the collectors. The boxes were tied up with strings. After finishing the sweeping, An Su-hyun started spraying a bucket with water.

Then his eyes met mine.

“...”

He gave me a small nod. His eyes were free of any of the hostility that was normally present when he saw me. That’s why it was even more surprising. His original self wouldn’t have done such minor work or even acknowledged me.

"Yes, Father. I have changed the rubber plug in the sink of Room 502..." He picked up a call as I walked passed him.

As Yang Su-jin had explained, a person who died and revived wouldn't remember anything about the dungeon. If so, did it also change people? Was it like a fairy tale, where leaving the dungeon converted them? If so, it was something to be glad about.

But why? Was it a dissonance that his mind had created from his selfish, spoiled self? This thought remained in the corner of my mind. I would soon find out the cause.

Eject.

I took out the cloth bag from my inventory and placed the things I had prepared inside of it. The bag had less capacity than I thought because there were many 'different types.'

This was likely to work properly. Hopefully everything would go as I speculated. I stepped onto the staircase.

[5th floor, entered.]

As soon as I arrived, I could see that it was different from the

previous floors. It was bright and noisy. It was like an auditorium or a playground. It was a big space that seemed twice as large. The high ceilings seemed at least 6~7 stories tall.

There were also more than 100 people visible. “Oppa!” Yang Su-jin was right in front of me.

“I knew waiting here was the right answer! I came down the same stairs as Oppa so I thought we would show up in the same place.” There were no staircases anywhere around me. New people just appeared out of thin air.

“When did you get here?”

“Not long ago. One minute? Two minutes?” She looked at the wide space like she couldn’t believe it.

“Now these people...”

“Surely we won’t be fighting all of them?”

“We won’t. Take a look over there.” Not far away from us, there were men exchanging blows. Or rather, they were trying to.

Listening to their words, the two men had explored the fourth floor together. One of them had pushed the other down the stairs, forcefully outing them from the dungeon. The purpose was to monopolize the items and monsters. After that, the traitor came down another set of stairs but the two of them had ended up in the

same place. The victim and perpetrator tried to hit each other, but in the end, they couldn't reach. It was like an invisible wall had been sprayed with oil as any attacks just slipped off.

This was the floor of relaxation and exchange. However, the atmosphere wasn't particularly friendly. There was no one else with two people sitting around calmly, like Yang Su-jin and I. All of the people not fighting seemed to be alone. Rather than conversing with someone else, they were looking at people with the eyes of a predator.

It was natural. What had I gone through from the first floor to the fourth floor? Lions. All the people gathered here had done things in order to survive.

Apart from that... My attention moved to the centre of the space.

[■■■ Statue. Type: Golem Rank SS.]

[■■■ is a vessel made by harmonizing various materials. Unlike other golems, there is no control center, but it contains a high level of technology.]

[It is impossible to know whose voice will speak from it. Beware, even if it is just a servant, it is likely a messenger of a god.]

[Currently in an inactive state.]

It was a stone statue thousands of times larger than a gargoyle. It was kneeling but the head was almost touching the ceiling.

“Well, it seems to be two S’s. Oppa, do you also see it?”

“Yes.” Naturally, it wouldn’t be the S in the normal alphabetical order. I nodded towards Yang Su-jin. We moved to one corner of the wide space and were able to look at the bigger picture.

The frequency of people appearing out of thin air was decreasing. After 10 more minutes, there were approximately 200 people in the room and no new people were arriving.

Kuuong.

[■■■ Statue. Active.]

The statue had started to move. “What the!?”

“T-This...!” Many people screamed in surprise or tried to run as far as possible away from the stone statue. However, there were a few exceptions. Some were only interested in the movements of the statue, as if they predicted it would happen. There were also people who closely examined the statue like I did.

Ojeok.

There was a crushing sound from the head of the stone statue. A mouth formed on the face that had been as bland as a ghost.

[Yes, hello.]

It was a far too polite and soft voice. “...” This time, I was sure that everyone was confused.

[Let's see... Wah, a lot more arrived than I thought.]

As it spoke, the stone statue started to look everywhere.

[Welcome to the 5th floor! I am called ‘Iphos’ and I’m the mentor of this V9 area.]

Everyone became quiet.

[I am the servant of the one who brought everyone into this dungeon.]

How the thing was possessing the statue wasn't an important issue. What mattered was that it was the one who could give them information on the god who caused this mysterious phenomenon.

"Lord." A middle-aged woman cried out and broke the silence. She held the cross hanging around her neck and looked up with an expression of reverence.

[Um. Sorry, but the one who sent me isn't your god.]

"..." Her face became rotten in a short period of time. I could hear Yang Su-jin giggling from beside me.

[The god I serve isn't from this world. He brought you to this dungeon, as well as various other dungeons that exist in the world, and reassembled them for you.]

Nobody said anything.

[Ah, good question!]

The doll pointed to one man as it spoke. Was it able to read our

minds?

[Explaining these things is such a hassle... Oh, no, I'm supposed to be nurturing you.]

What was the purpose for the nurturing? If it could read minds, it was probably reading this from the minds of everyone here.

[The original people of this world couldn't fulfill their mission. They failed to attack the place he wanted to conquer.]

I suppose that place had the form of a dungeon like this...

[That answer is correct!]

... I was surprised. The statue was laughing while pointing at me.

[As expected from the one who occupies the overall first place in the V9 area. You have certainly noticed faster than others in this world.]

Overall first place? I could feel countless gazes aimed towards me. I remained calm despite all the eyes observing me. They were able to fully understand the statue's words in a short moment.

[Anyway, he decided to scout people from other worlds. Of course, he wanted to bring everyone without any discrimination, but he can't do whatever he wants with beings from other worlds. So he set one condition.]

Perhaps it was desire. It was a word that had emerged in several messages. Perhaps more desire than others...

[Another correct answer! Indeed, the first place!]

That bastard. Despite only having a mouth on the face, I strongly felt like it was winking at me.

[Yes, it is desire. You aren't satisfied with what you have and are continually seeking something higher. His judgment wasn't wrong.]

The following words didn't come from the statue's mouth. Letters appeared in front of me. Like everyone else, I stared at it.

[The talents and skills you will gain in the dungeon are your rewards. Bring out all your potential, become stronger and reach the last floor.]

“Do you really need to use this method of nurturing?” It was a man who spoke up. He walked up to the stone statue with challenging eyes. “If the being is something similar to a god then can’t he just give experience to everyone in this room?”

[It takes trials to give birth to a hero.]

The stone statue opened its mouth. Its tone was like a child talking to a cute hamster.

[Giving strength is deadly for children who can’t fight. Won’t you easily be killed by an adult with their bare hands? Besides, it seems like you are mistaken. There is nothing free in this world.]

“I knew it!” The lady with the cross shouted again. She pulled the cross necklace and held it up towards the statue. “This is the path of the devil! Tempting people to do bad things!”

I was reminded of where I had seen people like her before. A woman holding a sign in front of a nearby bus stop or those talking

about hell 365 days year round. It had the smell of a pseudo-church. Until a short time ago, she'd had the attitude of looking up at an apostle of god.

[Uhh, this is difficult. Even if it is bad things... Didn't you kill all the explorers on the same floor as you?]

All eyes focused on the middle aged woman. Honestly, she didn't seem that strong but I couldn't judge a person from their appearance.

"I-I..." Her eyes shook violently but it was only for a moment. "I thought it was the will of the Lord... I am still the Lord's servant, Devil! Repent for your sins..."

[Oh, I don't know.]

Ttakkuong.

The stone statue moved. Its finger descended. The body, struck by a stone body that dwarfed her, instantly bounced backwards, and blood pudding hit the wall.

[Anyway, it doesn't seem like she was intelligent enough to last long... Although she was pretty good... Ah, what to do?]

It scratched its head like it was really in trouble.

[Ah, do you know that it isn't really death?]

It changed the topic in a bright voice.

[As some of you already know, even if you die here, your body and mind is restored in your original world. He cares for you as much as possible... Oh, naturally there is an admission fee.]

At that moment, An Su-hyun popped into my head.

[Bringing a lot of people and giving them talents... Dealing with the existence of another world is a very difficult problem. Thus, we take it. The reason you were able to come here. Your desires.]

‘Is that all?’ appeared on people’s faces.

[Do you think that is isn't a big deal? Maybe some people live

without any desires, and it is encouraged as a virtue. Still, human desire is a very expensive energy source.]

I understood. Like the words of the statue, my evaluation of desire was different than it was in the past. Another way of life. I also think that people who can live without any desires is respectable.

But it wasn't for me.

I had seen An Su-hyun. He used to be a jerk but... If I didn't have desire... From the beginning, I wouldn't have been anything.

[Then, shall we have an event?]

The stone statue spread out its hand. There was a small light hovering over it.

[This is a talent from the lady I just sent back. A small mistake... It was a cleansing but her exit wasn't normal.]

At the end of the stone statue's words, everyone's eyes filled with greed.

[This is a risk free game. I will give this talent to the winner of the game.]

Chapter 16 – Day 5, 5th Floor Hunger

The next moment, the stone statue melted down.

[Please step away from me.]

Just like an ice cream in summer, the stone statue became a puddle and started to form a shape on the floor. It was a large plate that was one metre in height. The square plate filled 1/5th of the entire floor.

The stone statue, which was no much smaller than before, stood on top of the ‘stage.’ Even so, the statue was still three metres tall.

[Originally, I wanted to do a tournament but there is a space constraint. Some people will also want to take a break. Those who are willing can come up at any time.]

As soon as the stone statue finished talking, dozens of people rushed towards the stage at once. There were the words ‘no risk’ so they thought there was nothing to lose. The man who was first on the stage was the one who had neared the statue to question it. The people behind him were pushed out.

[Then, we will now begin.]

The very next moment, a number came up in front of me. The man on the stage asked with a confused expression.

“Eh? What is this number three?”

The statue answered everyone, not just the man.

[The number in front of you is the number of competitors you will have to defeat in order to get the talent on top of this stage. With a minimum of two people, the number has been assigned as fairly as possible considering your abilities and grades.]

Some people were sulking.

[Now, please come up on stage to challenge this person.]

A man immediately jumped onto the stage. He had a confident expression. It wasn't hard to guess the reason why.

“Does he have a higher number?”

“Yes.” It was like Yang Su-jin thought. The number was the same as a person's strength. The man on stage had unintentionally said

‘three.’ Therefore, those with a higher number would feel confident.

[Even if your HP becomes zero, there is no out. Now. Start.]

The fight began. The man with the number three was pushed back. it was almost one-sided as his health fell to the bottom.

“Eek!” He swung a fist at the opponent’s chest.

“Heh!” The opponent snorted like it was ludicrous... Then his complexion gradually changed and he spat up blood. There was a needle in his chest where the number three man had punched. Even though it wasn’t deep, the opponent’s HP decreased in a very short amount of time.

“Poison?”

“Poison.”

[You have won the match. Who will be the next challenger? If a challenger doesn’t appear in less than a minute, then he will get half the talent!]

I took my eyes off the stage and moved further into a back

corner.

“Aren’t you watching?” Yang Su-jin asked. There was no need to do so. The man only had a three. Rather, it was better to wait until the fervour had died down. Didn’t they know that the poison and needles were equipment that they were throwing away when it was needed for future dungeon progression?

[You have lost.]

It wasn’t surprising. The number three man had quickly received another challenger. He was showing signs of weariness. The opponent also knew his trick so he couldn’t use it again.

[Now! Do we have a next challenger? If your number is ‘two’ then you only have to win once!]

That was impossible. I pulled out the cloth bag. There were three thick books.

[Learn Programming Efficiently]

[The Basics of Mathematical Problem Solving]

[Advanced English: Reading]

“Ah...” Yang Su-jin’s face was filled with shock. The talents you could get inside a dungeon were limited. But... what if I took books from different fields and read them? Would I be able to gain different abilities?

“Check the situation on stage. Tell me immediately if it seems like someone is going to get the talent.”

“Ah, yes!”

I started with ‘Learn Programming Efficiently.’

[Talent has been acquired.]

[Talent – Reading Comprehension: The ability to read words faster. Understand the meaning of words will rise according to the level. Memory, thinking power and concentration have slightly increased.]

I continued reading.

[Reading Comprehension. Lv 1. 34/100]

I didn't receive programming. I had expected it, but it was worth trying. In the previous dungeon floors, I had tried wrestling with the air or swinging a fist at the wall. If I could raise the level of Punching then I would stay in the dungeon until I could no longer hold out.

However, it was useless. The level didn't increase because the experience rise was too slow. A condition was that the action needed to be valid.

In the case of programming, the talent didn't appear because I was merely skimming a theoretical book. Then... What about the second book? The Basics of Mathematical Problem Solving. It was the easiest mathematics book for beginners.

Mathematics. It was an area I wasn't particularly good at in middle or high school, but would there be some results since it was all in my head?

[Talent has been acquired.]

[Talent – Mathematics: The ability to clearly understand numbers, volume and space problems related to various objects and phenomena will rise according to the level. Thinking power, spatial perception and insight have slightly increased.]

Okay. Although it was slow, experience was definitely rising as I

read the book. Now I was down to the last book. Advanced English: Reading. If I could get Mathematics then of course this should work.

The question was, what would the result show up as?

[Talent has been acquired.]

[Talent – Language Acquisition: The ability to learn languages other than your native language. Language acquisition will become faster and more accurate. Thinking power has slightly increased.]

[Talent has been acquired.]

[Talent – English (Reading, Writing): The ability to read and write English will rise according to the level. Thinking power, reading comprehension and planning have slightly increased.]

[English (Conversation) will be corrected according to the level.]

There was also this. I read the book without hesitation.

[Reading Comprehension Lv 2. 177/200]

[Language Acquisition Lv 2. 4/200]

[English (Reading, Writing) Lv 2. 99/200]

[Concentration has exceeded its limit.]

[Concentration: 12]

Suddenly, a small water bottle was pushed in front of my face. It was Yang Su-jin;s doing. “Your lips, they are dry.”

I became aware that I had a really sore throat. I opened the lid and asked, “How much time has passed?”

“Well. Two or three hours?” So quickly?

“It is the first time I’ve seen someone concentrate like this. Not even the best student in my class...”

I ignored the burdensome gaze and looked towards the stage. “Ah, that’s right!” There was a clap as Yang Su-jin started looking through her bag. I had given one of the two bags to Yang Su-jin so she would be able to bring what she needed in with her.

Her brain was young and quick so she might bring something that I would never think about. I was half filled with expectation.

Yang Su-jin pulled out something that I never imagined from her bag.

“Voila.”

There were two very big thermos. No, it wasn’t a thermos... They were heated lunch box tins. Although I accepted it unconsciously, the water bottle was also strange. As soon as Yang Su-jin opened the lid, the scent of hot steaming food wafted out.

“What is this smell?”

“Soy sauce stew...’ As the smell of food spread, gazes moved from the stage towards this area. They looked dumbfounded. I was also the same.

“What? What is with that look? I brought this.” Yang Su-jin clearly wasn’t a normal schoolgirl in many ways.

“Well. I would have brought a book like Oppa if I had thought about it. Honestly, I came up with this the moment I received the bag.”

“I se...e.”

“It isn’t instant food nor does it have MSG. Everything is homemade. Except the meatball! They are the three minute ones.”

I... I picked up the box. In fact, I was hungry. Two or three hours had passed, and it was a lot more time than I had spent on the 1-4th floors. As long as it filled me up...

“Eh?” A sound emerged from my mouth.

“How is it? Delicious. Is it delicious?” It wasn’t because of the flavour. Letters had appeared the moment I took a bite.

[Hunger has recovered by two.]

[Current hunger: 58/100]

I looked at the water bottle. I had forgotten to drink it after opening the lid due to the appearance of the lunchbox, but if I drank it now...

[Thirst has recovered by 20.]

[Current thirst level: 91/100]

“Is it that delicious?”

Seeing was believing I picked up a meatball and held it out to Yang Su-jin.

“No... Uh...”

“Why are you paying attention to the surroundings? Eat it quickly.”

“....”

She blushed, sweeping her hair behind her ears as she opened her mouth... Something was strange but I kept holding it.

“..!”

Yang Su-jin made a shocked expression. I was conscious of all the people looking at us. Anyway, it was nice that she brought some food. This discovery was quite meaningful.

So far, clearing the dungeon floors had only taken one or two hours at most. If there were no problems on the fourth floor then it would have only been one or two hours.

But what if the space kept expanding? Or there might be a time consuming event like this one.

“Eat as much as you can now. As long as you can still move.”

“Yes.” I looked over at the stage.

“Excuse me, but is it delicious?”

There was a policy that people couldn't challenge the ring a second time, but this was still taking an unexpectedly long time. The reason for the constant fighting was that the number of opponents couldn't be precisely known. If I remained idle then there was a chance the game might be over.

In fact, I didn't think it was a good idea to jump in at the beginning. I had seen the first fight. I would jump in once the number of competitors decreased. I also wanted some time to read the books since I didn't know what would happen in the future. But now I was decided.

“What is your number?”

“Me? Well... Seven. I don't have many capabilities other than my regeneration ability.”

I nodded and waited. Once everyone was hungry...

Otherwise...

[Twenty-two.]

I wasn't confident about fulfilling this nonsense number. I wasn't a martial arts hero.

The time had come. I climbed up to the stage.

Chapter 17 – Day 5, 5th Floor False Evil

I could feel everyone's gazes. I was that person- The '1st' place... They didn't say anything but I could tell they were thinking it.

The other person was a man approximately my age. He had a solid body, stylishly shaved hair and had won eight consecutive victories. His expression showed that he was confident about his ninth victory.

He took out medicine from his inventory and drank it. "That meal looked delicious, but can you move properly with a full stomach?" Was he observing me? His taunt that was mixed with unease sounded pretty awkward.

"Yes." I gave an inflexible, but sincere, reply. There was a funny expression on his face as I answered.

[Now, begin.]

The other person immediately rushed at me. His technique was easy to identify- it was a technique to make his body solid. He swung a fairly big hammer. Maybe it was to hide the punch coming from his other hand.

"Urat!" He made a fist with all his strength.

Limiter Release.

[Muscle strength has exceeded the limit.]

[Muscle strength: 13]

Thirteen. Although it was only an increase by one, I could see that any ability over 11 points was enormous when just looking at reflexes that had 12 points. The other person's fist wasn't slow. It was a fast punch reminiscent of an athlete, but I was able to easily avoid it.

Deopsseok.

"Uh, ut." I grabbed at his waist, then used my strength to lift him up from the ground. Even though he had the ability to harden, his weight wasn't that heavy.

I slammed the opponent onto the ground and climbed on top of him. Limiter Release was turned off, but it didn't matter due to the huge difference in muscle strength.

[Talent has been acquired.]

[Talent – Grappling: The ability to throw the opponent. Damage will rise according to the level. Muscle strength and

balance will slightly increase.]

I was thankful, but there was still a lot left to gain. I held one of the hands of the opponent behind his back. I took his left little finger and folded it hard.

Crack.

There was the sound of metal breaking rather than bone, and it was quickly followed by a scream. “Ah, uwaaaack! Hey, what, what are you doing...?” I truly wanted to thank him, but it wouldn’t end with just this.

Creak.

“Kuaaack! Stop, I surrender! Surrender! S...” It probably wouldn’t work. I looked at the statue. Of course, it didn’t interfere.

So far, no one had ‘surrendered.’ The assumption was that they wouldn’t die when the HP reached zero, so everyone hit with all their power. Fight until the HP was zero.

I grabbed the ring finger this time. It broke.

“Kuook!” There was a foaming sound. His HP was only decreased a tiny bit.

[Talent has been acquired.]

[Talent – Torture: The efficiency of dealing physical/mental distress to others. It will increase in proportion to the level. Emotional control has slightly increased.]

[Has a complementary effect with the Talent – Compulsion.]

“Stop, stop, stop. Please, what, what are you doing?” He had already provided enough: I had gained talent and experience. Now his screams would apply psychological pressure to the other people. There was a reason for inciting fear in the other humans.

It was difficult to win against 22 people. If so, my goal was to frighten them; to prevent them from challenging me at all. There was nothing to lose so why not try it once? That was my idea.

I broke the last finger of his left hand. It was the thumb.

[The level of a talent has risen.]

[Torture. Lv 2. 4/200]

“Ack!” It would be a lie to say that his screams didn’t hurt me.

Torture couldn't be justified even if the person wasn't killed.
“Stop... Please, please...”

I wanted to close my eyes and my ears. But I couldn't. If I showed even the slightest sign of weakness then a few contestants might use that gap.

[Emotional control has exceeded the limit.]

[Emotional Control: 11]

Once I finished with the right hand, shouts began to be heard from the people watching. “Stop it, you bastard!”

“Are you even a human?” Crowd psychology was truly scary. Fear became secondary as they protested the ethics.

It was good enough. “I will stop it then...” I formed a fist and punched the poor man's head.

Kung!

The screaming stopped. “... I-Instantly...” Although it was painful, most of the man's HP was intact. The remaining amount had disappeared instantly. When considering the punch contained 13 strength, the fact that his head was against the floor made it the perfect scene for directing.

I threw the unconscious body outside the stage. Then I beckoned.
“You told me to stop, so I need someone to replace him.”

[Talent has been acquired.]

[Talent – False Evil: The ability to plant an evil impression on others. It will increase in proportion to the level. Charisma has slightly increased.]

[Talent has been acquired.]

[Talent – Induce Fear: The ability to plant fear in the minds of others. It will increase in proportion to the level. Charisma has slightly increased.]

[Benefits will open at Lv 5.]

[Charisma has exceeded the limit.]

[Charisma: 11]

Those who yelled avoided my gaze as I gestured. It took almost a

minute for a challenger to emerge. “I-I’ll do it.” It was a woman in her early 30’s. She didn’t seem like someone who could hurt anyone. She was very passive as she headed up to the stage. It seemed like she thought I wasn’t going to torture a woman.

Or... She plunged forward as soon as the stone statue announced the start of the battle. She narrowed the distance with a light smile and took out a fist like cylinder.

Pak!

It was some type of launch device as I felt a pain in my chest. Nine needles were lodged in my chest in a circular pattern. I fell to my knees. “Huhu. Thank you.” My smile became bigger.

The woman shook the cylinder as she approached. “Thanks to you, I received a very good idea.”

“...” My kneeling body shook as I didn’t say anything. Nine more needles entered my chest. The poison kept seeping inside me. The woman’s attitude completely changed as she pushed at my chest. I fell and the women climbed on top of me.

“...”

“I am just doing what I learnt from observing you. So please scream a little more.” Was this her original preference? It seemed like she didn’t like the fact that I wasn’t screaming. She thought I was trying really hard to endure it.

“Eh?” The body spasms and stupid moaning stopped. I grabbed the woman’s throat like I was going to crush it.

[Pain Tolerance. Lv 6. 2339/3200]

I had the various antidote drugs received from Yang Su-jin on the fourth floor, so I had received the woman’s needles without worrying. I flipped the upset woman over and put her down on the floor. The woman’s eyes were filled with astonishment and questions as she looked up at me.

I just said, “A dramatic production.”

The woman’s voice trembled as she begged. “Do... Don’t... Please.” Wasn’t this her preference?

“Then you have to pay for it.”

“P-Pay?”

“I want all the items you have, including that launcher.” Once ejected, the items dropped to the floor with a loud sound.

[Yabsel Manufactured Homemade Dart Gun. Equipment item.]

Rank D.]

[A launcher used by the nomadic people of the Yabsel Desert. It mimics the structure of the archer scorpions that inhabit the desert and is made from the curled stem of a cactus. It can launch up to nine needles at once and there is no restriction on the size of the needles.]

[The poison won't disappear even if the fired dart hits the ground.]

“I-I gave it. Now let me go.”

I started. The bones that didn't have the capability of being hardened were easy to break. The sound was more playful and above all, there was no guilt. Pain Tolerance made the pain of the nine needles more ‘tolerable’, but it didn't remove it.

[Torture. Lv 3. 4/400]

Once the woman's HP became zero... I wouldn't describe it. Honestly, I was a little bit nauseous seeing it. I instead picked up the items that fell to the ground.

Except for the dart launcher, they were all cosmetics and coins. When the torture of the woman had been in full swing, her shaking had dropped additional things.

[Are there no more challengers?]

No one answered. In other words, it was a yes.

[Good! The owner of the talent has been decided.]

The stone statue walked over to me with the light. The letters didn't appear immediately.

[The additional talent will be applied on the 6th floor. Now, please go back to your place.]

I nodded and descended the stage. "...Uhh."

"Euh..."

The people surrounding the stage parted like the Red Sea. It had been approximately 20 minutes since I first got on the stage. Certainly, I wouldn't want an encounter with me after watching me torture someone for 20 minutes. There was only one exception.

"Thank you for your efforts!" Honestly, I had been wondering if

there was a possibility of betrayal but Yang Su-jin just greeted me with bright eyes. She whispered in a low voice. “It was very cool.”

Cool? “You, did you see what I did?”

“Of course. I watched it all.” It wasn’t just laughter but worry on her face. My lips were white. Sweat was dripping down my forehead.

“It isn’t like you wanted to do it. That wasn’t an easy task. So you were cool.”

“... You also aren’t normal.” Just like me. I placed the dart launcher in my inventory, and looked at the unknown bottles I’d also picked up from the woman.

“Can you look at this for me?”

“Of course. I will identify the bottles and hand them over again.” I leaned against the wall and breathed deeply. It was mental rather than physical fatigue. Yes. What was next? Everyone’s gaze had already moved towards the stone statue.

[As I told you, the dungeon you are exploring is a nurturing course. It is a place for your growth. Therefore, it doesn’t matter how many people reach the ‘end.’ Those who reach the end of the dungeon are qualified in his eyes.]

Once we cleared this dungeon, which was a practice course, we would encounter why ‘he’ wanted us. I asked myself a question: Was it mandatory to attend the game?

[I’m afraid so. It can’t be helped since we brought you for that purpose in the first place. If you don’t participate then it will be treated the same as an ‘out’ in the dungeon.]

Completely losing all desires.

[But don’t think about it too much. You have gained strength through his power, and can gain recognition even if you don’t succeed in attaining his purpose.]

Is that... so? The stone statue was clearly looking at me. I felt like it was laughing.

[Then, please receive this prior to going to the 6th floor.]

[‘Return Ticket: 5th Floor’ has entered your inventory.]

[If you tear the ticket, you will be sent to the 5th floor for 12 hours of rest. It isn’t present now, but there will be shop and

various facilities. After the 12 hours, you will return right back to where you tore the ticket so be careful.]

Finally, the stage started to shake.

It wasn't turning back into the huge statue again. The height reached a certain size and several small square plates were formed.

[I will send you in groups of 'seven.' Relax and wait. Once seven people are selected, stand on the platform in order to go to the sixth floor. Let me know and I will send you immediately.]

Seven people. It didn't say whether the seven people would fight or cooperate on the sixth floor. It was rather abrupt to join up with five other people who I had never shared a word with.

[Oh, I will write this as reference.]

One whole wall was filled with large letters.

Kim Hee-chul.

It was a list of 244 names. This was the leaderboard.

[Please note that the last seven players will automatically be on the same team.]

The silent space instantly became filled with conversation. People were checking each other's names and ranks while planning out combinations.

“They aren’t coming towards us.”

“To be exact, they aren’t coming towards me.” ‘Number one’ was a number they couldn’t reach. A little while ago, they had seen my brutal actions. All the people were thinking hard to try and avoid becoming part of my group.

As such, there was nothing I could do. I sat on the floor and opened my book, pouring all my focus onto the pages.

How much time had passed? The surroundings were quiet.

I raised my head.

Chapter 18 – Day 5, 5th Floor Social Standing

According to my estimate, there were 30 people left, which was more than I thought there would be.

The remaining people weren't communicating with each other. They knew those left at the end would have to form a team so they just watched each other's faces. It seemed like they wanted to stay until the end.

Tak.

There was a loud sound as I closed the book and 30 pairs of eyes focused on me. “Please hand me the leftovers from our meal and water.”

“Yes!” I ate the remaining food and drank water. I had already eaten but some time had passed and I was quite hungry, so why shouldn't I eat the remaining food? Of course, I finished it quickly and turned my attention back to the book.

“Again? I'm bored because you're only looking at books.”

“Read this.” I threw the mathematics book at Yang Su-jin and concentrated.

[Reading Comprehension. Lv 3. 44/400]

[Language Acquisition Lv 2. 187/200]

[English (Reading, Writing) Lv 3. 13/400]

Some time passed and I saw a shadow in front of me. I looked up to see a man standing over me. His angular face and thick eyebrows gave off a tough impression. When he opened his mouth, a thick and calm voice came out. “I’d like to go with you.”

“Your name?”

“Kwak Yu-han.” I looked at the list on the wall. Kwak Yu-han was in 7th place. “If you let me go with you...”

“Wait there.”

“...”

“Do you want to go with me? Then wait until everyone is gathered.” Kwak Yu-han’s eyes widened like he was surprised and he nodded. He sat down against the wall and leaned on it.

That was the beginning. After seeing me accept Kwak Yu-han so easily, the rest of the people started to gather around. “I-I will go as well.”

“My name is...” I had put on a wicked act. In order to get what I wanted, I was a powerful person who did terrible things without changing my expression.

So what were their motives for going with someone like this? Kill me or ‘eat me’? It was an easy way of thinking, but would all thirty something people think the same thing? I needed to think more realistically.

I looked at the crowd of people gathered and raised my index finger before I made a ‘shh’ gesture and everyone fell silent. This compliant response was my evidence. In general, there weren’t many who would choose to fight someone stronger than them. They would rather choose to go under that strong person.

“Excuse me, you there in the front. Your name?”

“Kim Jong-gyu. I...”

“Rank.”

“125...” I raised my hand to stop him. “Huh?”

“I would appreciate it if you get out of the way so I can see the others.”

Kim Jong-gyu’s complexion changed. “Nope. Can you just listen

to me for a minute? Just please take me. If you let me accompany you then I will do whatever Kim Hee-chul ssi tells me to do. So..."

He was a fairly educated person so his words flowed smoothly, but it didn't matter. "Excuse me, Ajusshi." I interrupted Kim Jong-gyu and pointed a finger. His head looked in the direction of my finger like a dog. He saw the people silently watching the conversation.

"See them? Do you think that any of these people will be less hardworking than Ajusshi?"

"..." Kim Jong-gyu's expression was embarrassed. It was a smart idea but he had too many competitors. A person with the strength of two people. Two people who moved as one. I had wondered if it was easy to break through this dungeon, but I hadn't been able to find a good answer.

But that was before killing someone in this dungeon. I would gain the 'talent' they had in the dungeon. It wasn't 1+1, but rather 1+0.1~0.2. I hadn't suddenly become a genius just because the loser was killed.

Moreover, considering that techniques weren't passed down if someone was killed, the best way to break through this dungeon was to work as a team. Of course, it wasn't that easy. Trust didn't suddenly sprout from the ground.

Even if two people who were similar in skill were able to hold hands and negotiate, it was hard to trust one another unless they

believed in each other thoroughly. But what if they weren't equal? What if there was a clear hierarchical relationship?

Obedience. Rather, the one on the bottom could be comfortable as they obeyed the one above. By giving up that initiative, I had to be confident that the person wouldn't betray me.

The second successful candidate was a boy around 20 years ago. He was somewhat defiant and handsome. Compared to the well-grown body, his face was still immature. "Kim Ha-jong. 19th place."

"Go wait at the wall." Ever since Kim Jong-gyu's exclusion, half the people had turned away silently. Perhaps they were ranked lower than Kim Jong-gyu. There wasn't the least bit of value in bringing them with me.

The third and fourth people that I picked were a set. There was one girl who looked around Yang Su-jin's age. The other person was a boy who seemed to be one or two years older. "Siblings?"

"Yes. My brother is Lee Sang-hoon. I am Lee Min-ju."

Compared to the older sister's attitude, the younger brother seemed to be in a poorer condition. There was no eye contact and his shoulders were slumped. "My brother is ranked 185th but I am 15th."

"Are you a set deal?"

“My brother’s share... No, I am confident that he can do it.”

“This pair would be useless.” Yang Su-jin spoke in a mocking voice towards Lee Min-ju. She was looking at Lee Min-ju with dissatisfaction. Lee Min-ju was glaring back.

Clack!

“Ah!” I hit Yang Su-jin in the back of the head and nodded to Lee Min-ju.

“Go to the wall and wait.”

“Thank you!” The sister pulled her little brother away without saying a word.

“A-Are you really going to take them?”

“Are you jealous of a younger woman?”

“... It isn’t like that. I just don’t like her expression. She is trying to create an image that she works hard.”

“She is the 15th ranked. What are you?” Of course, I already knew Yang Su-jin was ranked 41st.

“Still...”

“You just have to follow my instructions. Clearly understand the line separating both of us. You don’t seem like the type of make a mistake like this.”

“...” Now there was only one spot left. Among all the people, one woman walked out. I thought she would come out, and I had been watching her from the beginning.

3rd rank.

The second time I saw her, Yoo Su-jeong had a creepy smile on her face. I had seen her kill and take An Su-hyun’s abilities two days ago. “I thought you would be popular, but this is beyond what than I imagined. You even caught a cute schoolgirl.” There was admiration mixed in, causing Yang Su-jin to feel uncomfortable.

In fact, I was quite uncomfortable as well. Yoo Su-jeong was wearing a grey dress that showed off her body and seemed to be intended to maximize her sex appeal.

“I...”

“Go back and wait.” I interrupted before Yoo Su-jeong managed to completely speak.

“Eh? Aren’t you going to listen to my story?”

“You are the 3rd ranked, so what do I need to hear?”

“Still...”

“I don’t want to hear one more word.” As soon as I finished speaking, I beckoned to the people leaning against the wall. I headed towards the nearby stage. Then I beckoned to Yoo Su-jeong.

“...Well, okay. It wouldn’t be bad to let you follow me.”

Yoo Su-jeong shook as she walked back towards me.

As she looked at me with discomfort, I grabbed Yang Su-jin’s shoulder, lowered my voice and whispered, “Walk with me.”

“Yes...? Yes.” She slowed down as naturally as possible, without making it seem like she had deliberately slowed down. On the other hand, I repeated numbers one by one. It was my cell phone number.

“Memorize it.”

“Yes.”

“Contact me as soon as you leave.”

“... Are you going to buy me a meal?” What was she talking about? Obedience was good. There was the Leadership talent so I was sure that there were plenty of talents in this field. Finally, after climbing onto the stage, I looked at all the ones left out.

To be honest, a leader might prefer leading those with insufficient abilities. However, the more competent and ambitious a person was, the more they would expect an equal relationship. Yoo Su-jeong was separate from that.

[Is this group of seven okay?]

The stone statue asked me. Once again, I read the invisible expression. It was smiling like it knew everything.

“Yes.”

I answered despite the statue’s ability to read my mind. I never thought I would be a leader. A person should know their capabilities. ‘Not being able to do it now’ was different from ‘not being able to do it.’

Right now, I wasn’t going to take care of those on the stage. I was better than them. I had enough talent to be ranked first and would receive new talents on the sixth floor. Yang Su-jin also had the means of distinguishing between potions and poisons.

On the next floor, I would kill five people. In reality, I would cooperate with Yang Su-jin and start the poisoning first. Subtracting one of the siblings, the actual number was four. It was fortunate that I could bring in someone slightly lacking due to his older sister.

Even if I had poison, it was a big risk to take down five people.

[Now, move on to the 6th floor!]

[5th floor cleared.]

My eyes opened. "...Well." Today, I had a test. I brushed my teeth, went to the bathroom and organized my schedule in my head.

I would go to school early in the morning and study with a friend until lunch. The test was at 2 p.m. And in the evening... I would meet with Yang Su-jin to make a plan.

However, there still wasn't a phone call from Yang Su-jin. There was also no rice in the rice cooker. I had forgotten to buy rice yesterday. Should I eat at the convenience store?

I put on sweatpants and left the front door. The elevator was just coming down from the fifth floor. My place was on the fourth floor. Ah, I missed it...

Dding.

The elevator stopped. Why was it was stopping at the fourth floor? There was no one I knew upstairs who would stop here except for the caretaker. I expected to see An Su-hyun's face when the door opened. However, it was the face of a woman.

"Ah, you were coming out." Yoo Su-jeong greeted him with a sincere expression.

"The day before yesterday. The manager told me. Hee-chul ssi lives in No. 405."

I formed fists inside my pockets. I was conscious of the CCTVs in the corridor. My expression didn't change. "I don't want to be stalked."

"Is that so? Hehe. I'm sorry if you are offended. But it couldn't be helped. I definitely needed to see you." I clicked my tongue and walked towards the elevator. The next moment, Yoo Su-jeong fell to her knees.

I pulled my fists out of my pockets and... Yoo Su-jeong was begging on her knees. "What are you doing? This..."

“Well. Isn’t this the basic posture when asking for a request?”

A request?

“Please don’t kill me. Please.” Yoo Su-jeong smiled brightly as she begged.

Chapter 19 – Day 6, 6th Floor

I heard the sound of a door opening. A neighbour who came out to throw away his trash passed by me and gave me a look that said, ‘You are capable. Hyung.’

I was capable. No, was it right to say that? I didn’t care about the looks of other people as Yoo Su-jeong stayed on her knees in front of me. I asked simply, “For free?”

It was a baited question. “Of course not!” The answer came straight away. A pair of gloves fell into Yoo Su-jeong’s hands. She stretched them back and forth for a bit like she was thinking, before extending them to me.

[Vicious Advisor’s Leather Gloves. Equipment item. Rank C.]

[The weapon of an adviser who has a notorious reputation as a torturer. After the death of its master, it has passed through the hands of many men and women. The fact that the leather hasn’t changed for centuries has produced lots of ghost stories. After the death of its last owner, a merchant, the whereabouts became unknown.]

[Additional damage to the opponent is applied in proportion to the pain dealt by the gloved hand.]

I immediately put it in my inventory. Of course, the gloves were

mine now. Therefore, Yoo Su-jeong hadn't offered me anything to negotiate with yet. "Now tell me why I shouldn't kill you."

She had given me the gloves first to buy my favour, so she wasn't stupid. "You are as shameless as I thought. I like it though. That item was just my personal courtesy to you." She said with a constant smile. "Include me in your plan."

"... You really are straightforward."

"Uh, do you like that?" She put a finger on her lips in a manipulative gesture against me.

"Don't you know that I hate unnecessary words and gestures? Don't try to flirt and use your body against me."

"You are over-rating me."

"I think that it is a proper evaluation. I noticed that your eyes are quite disciplined." Well, at least I could get the gloves.

"What if I don't want to involve you?"

"Will there be any other choice? As soon as I go down to the sixth floor, I'll scream. Kim Hee-chul is going to betray us." Yoo Su-jeong got up from the ground. It seemed like she was going to start trying to make a deal.

“I don’t want a lot. Just one person as my share...”

“I have no intention of agreeing. Do what you like.” I passed by Yoo Su-jeong. I took one step into the elevator. “Shouting is good. I’m looking forward to it.”

Yoo Su-jeong looked at the elevator with a shaky expression. Did she think my words weren’t true? I was a bit sorry, but I was serious.

“Then let’s see at midnight.” I pressed the button to close the elevator doors. Just before the doors closed, Yoo Su-jeong stepped in, her steps clearly impatient.

“This is going down. Are you going to the first floor?”

“Are you really not bothered at all? Even if you have that girl, won’t it be two against five?” Oh look. Her relaxation had disappeared. Her impatience was a sign of defeat.

“Why do you think it will be two against five?” If she said that I would betray them, everybody would be on guard. However, these people had come to me with the attitude that they would be subordinates under me. Would they believe Yoo Su-jeong that easily?

“Even so, it won’t be possible to kill all five people. I’ll be vigilant all the time.”

“It doesn’t matter. Because you are you.” It sounded romantic if a third party had heard it. But Yoo Su-jeong’s expression completely hardened. She realized her mistake.

“If I use the excuse that you are promoting dissent, I can publicly execute you. Of course, I will take your talent.”

As Yoo Su-jeong said, it would be difficult to kill her if she was vigilant. She would pay close attention. But she had something to lose. Third ranked talent. It was a chance to handle the most annoying human among the five people. Yoo Su-jeong’s mistake was coming to me in the first place.

“It is better to pursue my own path than have a snake constantly aiming for my back. Well, thanks for the courtesy. Thanks to that, one of the unstable elements I was worried about has disappeared.”

The elevator arrived on the first floor. Yoo Su-jeong left the elevator with a face that was paler than it was 30 seconds ago. I was calmer than I thought, which surprised me. I’d realized that I had been really embarrassed when Yoo Su-jeong fell to her knees.

If I was my usual self, then that embarrassment would have taken a while to disappear. Yoo Su-jeong would use that loophole. Fortunately, I obtained concentration from the dungeon. It was thanks to my various abilities.

“What if there is one more element to be anxious about?” Yoo Su-jeong stopped walking and spoke without looking back. “Among

the four people besides me, there is one who managed to conceal their ranking. I overheard them talking when I was by other people.”

That’s right. This was what she really intended to do. Originally, I would have been thankful for the information. “The second ranked person? It’s obvious they hid their rank so you wouldn’t know who they are.”

Was she planning to inform me? I looked at her back. Her body didn’t turn, only her head. I only had one thing to say. “Thank you for that as well.”

“...”

I left the building.

“This isn’t a matter for me to interfere in.”

“Huh?”

“Did you skip school?”

“Ah, no.” It was a reasonable question. Although I saw high school uniforms on the streets, she was wearing plain clothes after school. “Just... I don’t like wearing a school uniform outside.”

Well, I guess it made sense. I explained what happened in the morning. Yoo Su-jeong had come to find me. She ignored the part about Yoo Su-jeong and exclaimed with surprise. “Amazing. Indeed!”

“Is it so good that you have to react like this?”

“Of course!” Yang Su-jin’s eyes lit up.

“Then you will kill her?”

“Eh?”

“I knew it when I saw her yesterday. I got an impression just looking at that woman. She is the type that will be a cancer if she is with us.”

A disease like cancer? In fact, there was no need for Yang Su-jin to speak since it was already confirmed that I would kill Yoo Su-jeong. “Oppa, you don’t need to do any work since I’ll take care of it. I can’t die even if killed so can’t I be a suicide bomber and spread poison?”

“...” Yang Su-jin was more ambitious than I thought.

“Well, the idea is good. Leave that woman until the end.”

“Huh? Why? She is third place so killing her should be a priority. I don’t know who it is, but even if there is second place...”

“Since we don’t know who they are, we need to target the other people carefully.” Even if she was the third ranked, Yoo Su-jeong had come and negotiated with me. In other words, she wasn’t so confident in a direct confrontation. She had run away when she killed An Su-hyun.

Maybe she was weaker than Kwak Yu-han, who was in seventh place. This meant she was an opponent I could definitely win against in a direct confrontation. Rather, the remaining four needed to be poisoned first. To be precise, the most important target was the second ranked person hiding among them.

Anyway, even someone with a regeneration ability like Yang Su-jin would be out of action for a while if they were poisoned. “Once Yoo Su-jeong goes into action, the poison operation will need to be delayed. However, if you run away or watch for an opportunity, then you will have the chance to poison at least two people. Make sure you use as much as possible. Like you said earlier, be a suicide bomber.”

“Please leave it to me!” Yang Su-jin replied cheerfully. Then she rubbed a foot on the ground as she hesitated.

“But...”

“Tell me.”

“Can you please buy me dinner?”

“...”

There was a famous handmade burger restaurant nearby. Honestly, it wasn't a cheap price. However, even if she couldn't really die, I was still ordering her to act like a suicide bomber. Anyway, I was an adult.

Yang Su-jin found the food very delicious. She ordered french fries as well.

Just before midnight, I removed the leather gloves from my inventory. I checked it just in case it had been poisoned or something. The gloves were fine. I was grateful to Yoo Su-jeong for giving it to me. These gloves and the suicide bomber would shatter her chances of winning.

As for the existence of the second ranked person... Kwak Yu-han was seventh. Kim Ha-jong was 19th. Lee Min-ju and Lee Sang-hoon were siblings. One was ranked 15th and the other was 185th. One of them had tricked the rankings. Their faces were arranged in my memories.

12:00:00 AM

The stairs appeared and I took a step.

[All the talents and experience of the loser will belong to the winner.]

[The level of a talent has risen.]

[Compulsion Lv 3 -> Lv 4. Related abilities have increased.]

[Murder Lv 2 -> Lv 4. Related abilities have increased.]

[Deception Lv 2 -> Lv 3. Related abilities have increased.]

[Taunt Lv 2 -> Lv 3. Related abilities have increased.]

... Wasn't this lady religious?

[Talent has been acquired.]

[Talent – Meditation: The ability to find physical and mental tranquility through meditation and to activate potential abilities. It will rise in proportion to the level.]

[Benefits will open at Lv 8.]

[Lv 5. 46/1600]

[Talent has been acquired.]

[Talent – Dagger: The damage dealt by a weapon with a blade less than 30cm will rise in proportion to the level. Reflexes and muscle strength will slightly increase.]

[Lv 4. 32/800]

[Muscle strength has exceeded the limit.]

[Reflexes has exceeded the limit.]

[Muscle strength: 12]

[Reflexes: 13]

My vision changed as I read the letters that surfaced in front of me. I was in the dungeon. No, I should say ‘we.’ There were seven people standing in a circle. The air that touched our skin was chilly. Everybody took a step back, breaking the circle, and looked around.

Cries of astonishment burst from our mouths. We were in a huge

space. It was reminiscent of a soccer field, but much larger. Dozens of times? Maybe hundreds of times? The distance between the walls and ceilings was so large that I wasn't sure of the scale. And there was darkness below us.

The height couldn't be measured. Many stone peaks were rising to astonishing heights around us. The top of the peaks were flattened. We were standing on one of the highest peaks.

"Excuse me... I think there are people there." Everyone turned to look at Kim Ha-jong's words. Indeed, I could see seven points on a peak not far away from us. There wasn't only one peak with people. Everything was far away, but I could see at least eight peaks with people.

There were stairs on the edge of the peaks. The width was around two metres and the thickness seemed similar. A staircase leading to the top of a lower peak. But the incline was steep and the staircase was next to a cliff. We had to take this staircase and go into the unknown darkness?

If this was the '6th floor'... I guessed that it would take at least a day to reach the seventh floor. I suddenly felt eyes on me. There were six pairs of eyes watching me, waiting for my instructions.

What to do now? Yang Su-jin's gaze was asking that. Yoo Su-jeong was watching me with a stiff expression. Then letters showed up in front of me.

[Twenty.]

[Nineteen.]

[Eighteen.]

It only took a few seconds to realize that it was a countdown. The area under my feet started to shake.

The peaks were falling down.

Chapter 20 – Day 6, 6th Floor Prey

[Sixteen.]

I had to spray poison and kill everything within a dozen seconds. It was impossible. At this point, everyone had noticed and was running towards the stairs. I took a deep breath.

“Kwak Yu-han!” Of course, he turned to look back at me as well as the rest of the party. I called their names as quickly and clearly as possible. “You go down first. After that, Lee Min-ju and Lee Sang-hoon. Kim Ha-jong. Yoo Su-jeong. Go down the stairs in the order that I called. Come on!”

[Leadership. Lv 188/200.]

The moment that the countdown reached ‘two’, I stepped on the stairs with Yang Su-jin. The peak collapsed with a loud noise and the stairs started to shake. From the end that touched the peak, they started to fall one by one.

“Let’s go. Come on.” The speed that the stairs were crumbling was slower. One almost every second. If you weren’t afraid to take one step at a time then there would be almost no possibility of dying.

But there was no time to fight. I looked down and instantly became dizzy from the darkness below me. If I fell down there then I would surely die.

I looked at the five people who were in front of me, except for Yang Su-jin. At least two of them were thinking the same thing as me. There was no need to fight. A fall from this height would definitely kill people. If I just pushed them without having to fight...

Ahhhhh!

I turned to look as I heard an echo from far away. It was a scream from a staircase that was relatively close to us. The people there were fighting to push each other. The first loser fell, his panicked limbs waving frantically in the air just before he disappeared into the darkness...

“...!”

“Heok!” Everyone saw it. In the darkness, a giant mouth opened to swallow the victim’s body.

[Shadow Leech. Type: Animal – Malformed. Rank A.]

[A creature that exists in the dark space where light can’t reach. A dark fog is created from the secretion glands in its body to block light from entering its habitat. It swallows

animals that are smaller than it and receives nutrients by slowly squeezing fluids from the body. Due to its cold blood, it squeezes the food that enters its body as slowly as possible.]

[Although they are usually the size of one or two fingers, individuals can grow more than a few meters depending on the environment and food.]

[A malformed creature. It is different from others of the same species.]

One or two fingers to a few metres? Don't make me laugh. It was only a very short time, but I had seen the size of it. Although the length wasn't known, the width... After comparing it to the peak, it was as wide as a subway carriage.

And there wasn't just one. The second loser screamed and fell in succession. This time, half a dozen heads that resembled an earthworm rose simultaneously. They gravitated to the prey falling like carp chasing bread in the water.

The people fighting on the stairs didn't notice what was below them. In order to survive, they just fought with each other. Three. Four. Five. Six. The food fell in succession.

Finally, there was only one person surviving on top of the stairs. He raised both hands above his head and cheered with victory. But then the cheering stopped.

I thought I knew why. Of the six people he had pushed, none had been killed. No. Were they still alive? They had gone into the stomachs of the leeches.

“He is the biggest loser with no income. How pitiful.” Yoo Su-jeong spoke up. Unlike her calm words, she looked very pale. The leeches were also under us. This feeling? It felt like the darkness under my feet was slightly wriggling.

Maybe all that darkness... “There is something on the peak.” Kwak Yu-han reported from the front. We had descended the stairs and reached another peak. There were ten things, and they weren’t humans.

Light brown skin. A tail as long as their body. The closer I came, the more certain I was.

[Rock Lizardman. Type: Ajin (Demi-human). Rank E.]

[A subspecies of the lizardmen that live on rocky areas and cliffs. They form nests and live on bird monsters and various plants. They have a better sense of balance than normal lizardmen and their claws can climb the steep cliffs. Due to the weakness of cold-blooded animals, they always carry around warm stones to heat them up.]

Their tails moved as they watched us from afar. I could tell they were hostile just by their appearance. It wasn’t a bad opportunity.

I would give up on the experience this time and just watch the five people fighting.

The first one to attack was Kwak Yu-han at the front. The claws were pretty bloody but he didn't hesitate to dive straight in at a lizardman. I admired his smooth movements.

I had seen several people in the dungeon who seemed to exercise, but the movements of Kwak Yu-han was different. I didn't know anything about exercising, but... Wasn't he at the level of an amateur athlete or pro?

The second one was Lee Min-ju who wielded a stick with a blue jewel at the end. As it moved, frost formed on the skin of a lizardman nearby.; It was a tool similar to the ring I had given up on the 4th floor. That would certainly be a little dangerous.

The third was Kim Ha-jong. Due to the impression he gave off, I thought he would use his fists. However, he took out a long sword from his inventory. Both hands used the sword to deal a heavy blow that crushed a lizardman.

It was a blow that could threaten me, but I was certain I could take him. His speed was low so I could deal with him without the aid of poison.

And then there was Yoo Su-jeong. She was holding a dagger in both hands. The third ranked person wasn't strong, but she was fast. She didn't lose her vigilance and aimed for the vulnerable parts such as the back and underbelly. The movements of the third

and seventh ranked were certainly different.

I looked at the last person. Lee Min-ju's brother, Lee Sang-hoon. The 185th ranked person was watching the claws with a frightened expression. I watched him for a while before shouting. "Stop!" Everyone instantly looked at me and stopped their actions.

[The level of a talent has risen.]

[Leadership. Lv 2. 5/200]

They listened well. Frankly, I hadn't expected this much. There were three lizardmen remaining. They knew they had been defeated and were on the edge of the peak.

"I'm going to test something." I said as I went forward. I moved in front of the lizardmen without even raising my guard. It was a type of taunt.

"Shayak!" The two lizardmen in front rushed forward in unison. At the same time, my arms moved. I felt relaxed. I slightly moved my back foot and lowered my waist and head. The claws narrowly passed in front of my nose. Then my left hand and right hand moved.

One.

Peok!

Two.

Bakak!

Thanks to Limiter Release, my fists moved neatly. Two bodies were torn and fell down. Although I couldn't read the lizardmen's faces, the remaining one seemed quite scared. It turned its body towards a cliff. It wanted to get away by climbing up the wall.

Deopsseok.

I took three steps forward and grabbed its neck. I squeezed with all my power and lifted it with one hand. Then I threw it down.

“Siak!” I turned off Limiter Release and looked at the lizardman on the floor, then the five people behind me. There was amazement in their eyes. In particular, the higher the rank, the greater the degree of their discomfort.

I had ended three monsters in a single moment. Kwak Yu-han had been the fastest and he took longer to kill just one. It was a clear, unspoken message: they would die if they tried to eat me.

The plan to kill all of them had been pushed back. For the moment, this would be a challenge to raise my leadership. If so, I needed to make one thing clear. I wasn't the leader, but I was the strongest.

I grabbed the neck of the fallen lizardman. As mentioned earlier, there was something I wanted to test.

“Look.”

With that one word, I threw the lizardman over the peak. The lizardman fell into the darkness with a reptilian scream. Everyone waited for the leeches to catch it, but the leeches didn’t appear.

“Everybody saw that, right?” I opened my mouth and explained. “Leeches like ‘warm blood’ so dropping a lizardman with ‘cold blood’ is no use.”

“... But what does that mean?” Kim Ha-jong asked with confusion.

“So... Is there a reason to care?”

“Perhaps.” I pointed to the other side with my finger. The six pairs of eyes gazed in that direction. I had seen it when coming down the stairs.

They saw the peaks below us. To be exact, they saw next peak we were going to, which had another staircase leading down. The staircase wasn’t leading down to another peak, rather it ended as it entered the darkness.

“It is too optimistic to think that is going to the 7th floor.” However, it meant they had to literally go down into the darkness. Leeches would be inside that darkness.

“I am just guessing, but walking into the darkness is probably walking into the leeches’ stomachs. Since the darkness is their secretions...” They would aim for the hot-blooded organisms. They were leeches that liked humans.

I pointed to the other evidence to support it. There were two staircases leading down to the next peak. Not just us, but a staircase from another peak led down there.

The peak on the other side. On top of it, there were seven silent figures.

This was a crazy feeding game.

[Leadership. Lv 2 65/200]

Chapter 21 – Day 6, 6th Floor Leading Figure

The stairs continued to disappear.

Once half the staircase disappeared, the peak started to shake. Of course, at that point we had already gone down the stairs. “They’re looking at us.” Like Yang Su-jin said, the people from the other staircase were looking at our group. I had a gut feeling about the circumstances. We had arrived at the peak almost simultaneously.

“What’s your name? I’m Han Sang-ho, 35 years old.” A considerably large man came out as a representative of the seven of them with an axe on his shoulder. I hadn’t seen any of their faces on the 5th floor. Were they gathered from ‘another’ 5th floor? Maybe there was a balance.

“Kim Hee-chul.”

“You look young, approximately 20 years old?”

“23.”

“What rank were you on the 5th floor?” It was a very natural transition.

“Number one.”

“...” A slight hesitation was seen. Then a dubious expression

crossed Han Sang-ho's face. He studied me with a smile and shrugged. "I suppose it doesn't matter. I was fourth. Well, that isn't important. Have you thought of a way to break through that?" Han Sang-ho pointed to the stairs going down.

"It is impossible to get through without sacrificing at least one person. So I have a suggestion for you."

Han Sang-ho turned and pointed to his companions. I could guess before even hearing it. Two of the six people. One was a pale teenage boy and the other a frightened girl. "There is no guarantee that we won't encounter other people at the end. Furthermore, they might be 'people like us,' so isn't it better to leave the stronger people to the end?"

He had selected scapegoats. That was Han Sang-ho's main point. "I will pick three people and you should also pick some from your side. How about it, isn't it a decent offer? There is no need for useless conflicts. Let's go peacefully. Huh?"

Han Sang-ho placed the axe on the ground and extended a burly arm. I took his hand. "Okay. Let's be friends."

Han Sang-ho grinned. At the same time, Han Sang-ho poured strength into his arm. A tremendous pressure tried to crush my hand. His eyes showed that he was looking forward to my screams. He was confident in strength. This was his plan. He didn't believe that I was first place and decided to act.

If I was my original self then it would've hurt. However, now I

didn't feel any pain.

[Muscle strength has exceeded the limit.]

[Muscle strength: 14]

Crunch.

It wasn't the sound of my joints but the sound of Han Sang-ho's bones breaking. It was very clear who the one groaning was: they was coming from Han Sang-ho's mouth. "... Uck!"

He frowned and flinched, "Hah... This is a little..." Then his face distorted and his upper body shook. Han Sang-ho felt himself weakening. "Hey... S-stop."

"..." I kept using my strength. He was the one who wanted to suppress me with strength in the first place.

Crunch.

"This is crazy! Stop...!" Saliva fell from Han Sang-ho's mouth as his face turned red. He diverted his strength into his opposite hand that reached down and grabbed the axe, but my other hand also wasn't empty. I threw the bottle I was holding into Han Sang-ho's face. "Ack!"

I grabbed Han Sang-ho at the groin area and picked him up, then walked towards the end of the peak. No one was able to stop me. Han Sang-ho couldn't even swing his axe, let alone the people behind me. There was a scream as Han Sang-ho was thrown in the air.

A leech rose from the darkness to snatch him before disappearing. Within a few seconds, the leech couldn't be seen in the darkness anymore. The overall level wouldn't be reduced just by losing one person. A handful needed to be missing before it fell apart.

I needed to make sure that no one tried to push me down the stairs.

I turned around, but everyone was stiff. Of course, there were seven of us and six of them.

“You just, Sang-ho hyung-nim...”

“Did you know him? Sorry. He was talking nonsense.”

“Does that make sense? You son of a bitch!”

“Don’t be like that.” I laughed. Then I pointed to the man complaining. “You are number two?”

“What?” I raised a fist.

“You’re next.”

“...!” The number two took out a stick. But...

Seuk.

“Eh?” His forearm was cut off before he could swing it. A strike from the side. It was from Kim Ha-jong’s sword. They became familiar with something as we descended the stairs.

I focused on the opponent while moving my left hand. When I created a specific shape with my fingers, they had to do the corresponding action. Immediately after throwing Han Sang-ho, I had spread out the index finger and thumb of my left hand. In other words, strike the opponent.

Under normal conditions, people would hesitate to attack even if there was a signal. So I had made the situation easier. I got rid of Han Sang-ho and picked a second person with my taunts. This was enough to create an opportunity.

[The level of a talent has risen.]

[Leadership Lv 3 2/400.]

[Eloquence has exceeded the limit.]

[Eloquence: 10]

[Charisma has exceeded the limit.]

[Charisma: 12]

“Be careful not to kill him. As soon as he loses his breath, another person will be a substitute.” The feedback was clear. I wouldn’t weaken the opponent for no reason. It was a one-sided game. After getting rid of the leader and a second person, the rest became unable to think about fighting back.

Peace? Han Sang-ho’s words were foolish. I laughed just thinking about it. Peace was a long distance away... Although it seemed to be a rough solution to this floor, it wasn’t a reliable solution.

The leeches didn’t just bite, but slowly squeezed out the blood of a person. It would almost certainly be painful. The idea of having scapegoats wasn’t bad. However, everyone was at risk of being thrown except the leader and one or two other people.

There would be no unity. Of course, some people might follow

the leader but that was because of fear. This floor needed unity. It was a device that bound seven people together, but only temporarily. If it was seven against seven then the situation wouldn't have changed. After all, I had already branded three people who I could throw away.

Six desperate faces bowed down, kneeling on the ground. Kim Ha-jong stood in front of them like an executioner and asked. “Hyung-nim. Should we throw them all?”

“... Hyung-nim?”

“Uh, you are older than me... Didn’t you know? Haha.” Kim Ha-jong awkwardly scratched his head. His original nature was very fussy but it felt like he had gradually relaxed.

“If you feel uncomfortable...”

“Do what you like.” It wouldn’t make a difference. No matter how outwardly submissive he seemed, I would only trust him when it was convenient.

“Do you think that makes sense?” Yang Su-jin’s sharp voice rang out. She was confronting Lee Min-ju and Lee Sang-hoon.

“What’s the problem? I already told you that I will do my brother’s share.”

“So he is just going to stay still? Everybody is risking their lives

but what is he doing? Just sucking on his fingers.” It wasn’t hard to find the cause of the fight. In the fight against the lizardmen, Yang Su-jin had participated using the launcher. However, Lee Sang-hoon had just stayed in the background.

“Hey, I’m talking to you! Don’t you dare avoid my gaze!”

“...” But Lee Sang-hoon didn’t raise his eyes to the end. Yang Su-jin and Lee Min-ju simultaneously turned towards me. One side wanted punishment. The other wanted me to intervene.

“It can’t be helped if he can’t contribute due to a lack of ability.’

But... “But that doesn’t mean that he can do nothing. Is this the second time? There will be no third time.”

I pointed at the cliff with my thumb.

“If you do nothing the next time we encounter something, I will treat you as the very first volunteer if I need a scapegoat.”

“T-that...! You obviously promised me...”

“Doing the share of two people. Isn’t that what you proposed? Can you be confident that you can do the share of two people with all these members?”

“... Well, his words aren’t wrong.” Kim Ha-jong offered his

opinion. Kwak Yu-han was just watching silently. It wasn't the time to be overcome by emotions. Lee Min-ju had no justification. There was already a certain level of group consciousness.

As the sense of belonging grew, the hostility towards those who got a free ride would grow stronger. The next time... At that time, Lee Sang-hoon would have to demonstrate his skills. Then I would be certain. The evidence pointed to him being the second ranked.

I asked the six who were kneeling down. "From the right. Tell me your rank."

"9-98."

"15...6."

"144." So far, the answers were all high numbers.

"...36."

"25. I-I will do whatever you say. S-spare me."

"12." Compared to the first three, the rankers seemed to have some confidence. They believed that they wouldn't be the first to die. I would keep them alive for as long as possible in order to take their talents.

That's what they thought, but... "Start heading down. Go in the

order of the strongest ranked first.”

“Huh? In order of the ranking? Not the reverse? “

“Yes.” The involved people couldn’t believe it.

“No, wait a minute. Why are we going first? Why...?”

“Be quiet. I don’t want to kill you.” It wasn’t just about going down the stairs. They were captured prisoners, so I needed to notice any irregularities that occurred. The atmosphere made them all agree without hesitation.

“Yoo Su-jeong. Kwak Yu-han. Kim Ha-jong, take the lead with the three strongest ones. After that will be Lee Min-ju and Lee Sang-hoon. Yang Su-jin. I will be next. The three lower ranked will be between me and Yang Su-jin.”

Then I spoke to the three lower ranked.

“You will be put in the back of the line. Still, that doesn’t mean you are safe from the leeches. If you don’t want to be food for a leech, then don’t rebel.”

“...”

There will still several things I wanted from the six captured people. I wanted to make them spit out some items. However, the

collapse of this peak was near. I finally stepped on the stairs.

Then I muttered in a low voice. “Yoon Ji-hee.”

“...!”

Rank 156 was the lowest ranked person. The woman walking in front of me flinched. “Keep walking. Don’t show any signs. Just look in front of you. Listen to my words.”

“... Do you know me?”

“We go to the same school.” However, it was different. She was in business administration. A junior one year younger than me. She didn’t know me, but I knew her. “You don’t want to die here.”

“Yes, yes...”

“I will allow you to survive this floor. However, it depends on whether or not you want to cooperate with me on the next floor.” At the moment, a moan emerged from her mouth. Joy? Relief? There was a sound, no matter how quiet she tried to make it.

“Quiet.”

“I-I’m sorry. I... What do I have to do?”

“Think as much as possible. Until we escape from this floor.”

“...” The people in front stopped as they reached the darkness.

“The conversation ends here. Don’t talk now.” Kwak Yu-han threw off the number two person at the front of the line. The sight of the leech in front of their eyes was overwhelming. Ahead of me, Yoon Ji-hee was almost crying. I never imagined that Yoon Ji-hee would be a crybaby, but it didn’t matter.

Unless she had a lack of imagination, she should be able to understand what she could do for me. She wasn’t very famous in school, but I had heard about her from a senior. She was the granddaughter of Yoon Sang-gyu, chairman of the UZ Group. Perhaps that was as valuable as this dungeon itself.

Chapter 22 – Day 6, 6th Floor Wind

The leech swallowed the number two and the darkness started to lift. The scene that unfolded in front of my eyes was really quite surprising.

“... Peaks?” Someone’s mutter represented everyone’s feelings. The darkness on the stairs had been lifted with the sacrifice of just one person. The darkness was very thin, and only blocked the visibility due to the wide area it spread over.

“Hah...” Sighs of relief flowed from the mouths of the three low ranking people, including Yoon Ji-hee. They thought they wouldn’t need to be sacrificed to the leeches anymore. A few people were more cautious and remained silent.

There were three staircases descending from the peak, and on top of the peak was a huge creature.

[Rock Lizardman Chieftain. Type: Ajin (Demi-human). Rank C+.]

[Due to the species characteristics of the lizardmen, their size is proportional to how many years they have lived. Therefore, the oldest lizard will naturally become the leader. Since the leader’s age and proficiency will be different for each tribe, it isn’t unreasonable to judge the strength of a tribe based on the leader’s ability.]

There was just one. I could see it clearly from a distance. Its size reminded me of Kitchen Knife on the fourth floor, who was several times bigger than general lizardmen.

Besides, rank C+? The former lizardmen were rank E... The chieftain had a much higher rank. So far, it was the highest ranked monster that I had encountered.

Come to think of it, there was always significance to these things. From the first floor to the fifth floor, as well as the two peaks I encountered on this sixth floor... There was no section that didn't have meaning. Two teams of seven were assembled and the chieftain appeared on the peak after the darkness was lifted.

That bonus was to offset the formidable presence in front of us...

“Ah!” Yoon Ji-hee screamed. She wasn’t the only one who was surprised.

The lizardman was jumping up the stairs, and the stairs behind them were already disappearing. Retreat wasn’t the answer.

“Lee Min-ju! Your wand...” Just as I was giving instructions, something was quickly throw from the hands of the lizardman. I realized it was a noose after it caught around Yoo Su-jeong’s neck. She thought she had avoided it with her reflexes, but it wasn’t aiming for just a single point.

The rope tightened around her neck and she briefly moaned. The lizardman took two steps back on the stair, both hands holding the rope attached to Yoo Su-jeong's neck. Immediately after the lizardman's foot hit the top of the peak again, its body swung in a neat, semicircular pattern.

A normal person would explode. "Sha...?" There was a small sound and Yoo Su-jeong's body that hit the ground, suddenly disappeared. It was clear that the lizardman hadn't done anything. It stared with surprise at the empty noose.

A technique, perhaps a type of avoidance? Either way... That lizardman was strong.

The purpose of its existence was to reduce our numbers. The number of humans was a bait. "Go down! Quickly! Leave anyone who is trapped!" Kim Ha-jong and Kwak Yu-han, who were in the lead, hesitated for a while before following my orders.

As a C+ ranked monster, it was fast. My conclusion was that it wasn't something that could be easily killed, no matter how excellent one or two people were. The two groups had just come together so there would be no teamwork to defeat the monster.

I also ran down quickly. Kim Ha-jong and Kwak Yu-han were fighting well. They boldly attached themselves to the lizardman to prevent the use of its lasso. Lee Min-ju also used her staff and a painful gale of cold wind was shot at the lizardman.

Okay. Once I joined forces with them...

Pak!

“What?!” Kim Ha-jong suddenly shouted with shock. The lizardman had tumbled back and jumped down the peak. Everyone hesitated, but I could hear it—the sound of stones falling down from the peak.

The sound of the stones falling stopped at one point. “Lee Min-ju! Right!”

“Eh?” Her biggest mistake was looking at me, who shouted, instead of to the right. On the right. A noose protruded from the edge of the cliff and went exactly over her neck. “Keok.” Her head was yanked upside down with a moan. It was the end. The noose was fastened and Lee Min-ju was pulled over the cliff.

“Noona!” Lee Sang-hoon ran towards the edge of the cliff and shouted downwards. The sounds of stone falling could be heard from everywhere. The lizard was moving around by hanging onto the cliff.

“Move to the centre! Form a circle to watch the outside.”

“How about fleeing?” Yoo Su-jeong spoke up. Just as she had vanished suddenly, she just popped up in front of my eyes. Her HP Bar was reduced by one-third, so she had still received a blow. “We can’t beat it. Even if we win, more people here will die.”

Then she pointed to the upper stairs. Five people were coming down late. “We can use three of them as bait in order to walk down the stairs.”

“Is there any guarantee that it will be safe?” I shook my head. We couldn’t escape down the stairs. The lizard definitely had intelligence and there would almost certainly be victims of the noose. ... In fact, there was no other answer. It was probably impossible to escape down the stairs. If it was difficult to fight, scatter.

Then, was it impossible to catch the lizardman? “...Fight.” I concluded. If we concentrated our talents then we could break down the lizardman. By gathering in the centre to avoid the noose, it was an opponent we could fight. There was still time to go down the stairs. We just needed to hold on for a little longer.

That was the conclusion I came to. Suddenly, I felt pressure from behind me. A strong wind like a typhoon was suddenly blowing.

“Kyak!”

“Uck?”

I couldn’t withstand the pressure and rolled forward two or three times. It wasn’t just me. All the people in the circle were pushed out of the center by the wind. The cause of the storm stood there calmly: Lee Sang-hoon. No, I should say Lee Chang-ju.

I was able to identify the second name on the list because it was right under me. It was a male with the surname of ‘Lee.’ Also, the remaining four people had showed no need to hide their skills. In the end, the answer was almost certain. The so-called 185th ranked person was hiding his claws.

Immediately after entering the sixth floor, I had focused half my concentration on him. Yang Su-jin also smelt something suspicious. If I could prove that he was hiding his second place rank, I could publicly execute him without any rebellion.

But I hadn’t expected this at all. The reason he had the second rank wasn’t such a ridiculous thing.

“Ah... Ohh... Noona...” As he shed tears, another bar appeared on top of his head—a blue bar underneath the red bar. Technique? Talent? Was it a system that couldn’t be invoked until there were intense emotions? The only thing that was certain was that I couldn’t identify that child’s power.

“Crazy bastard! Stop!” Kim Ha-jong shouted. The force that pushed everyone out didn’t come back again, but an enormous amount of wind pressure was coming from Lee Chang-ju. It was at the level of a weak typhoon. It wasn’t impossible to walk or run, but it made a great difference in a situation where a single moment could cost us our lives.

However, Lee Chang-ju’s eyes weren’t seeing Kim Ha-jong at all. The lizardman had just climbed back over the cliff. It was because the ice wand, what it considered the biggest threat, had disappeared. It seemed completely unaffected by the wind.

“Dog scum!” Lee Chang-ju stretched out his hand. An airflow formed that was visible to the eye and struck the lizardman. The body of the lizardman staggered back due to the airflow, but that was it. The strong wind just disoriented it, but there were no injuries.

In the end, he was still a lower rank than me. The situation was difficult due to the peaks and the lizardman, but it was really hard to kill something using wind. Lee Chang-ju was unable to grasp this at all.

“Die! Die!” The blue bar visibly decreased every time an airflow was sent out and the lizardman staggered. The aftermath of the attack left it vulnerable to damage, but everyone else was pushed towards the edge and couldn’t move properly.

“Lee Chang-ju! Stop!”

“Shut up!” Lee Chang-ju shouted crazily and stretched out a hand towards me. The airflow struck my chest. Indeed, there was little impact. At best, it was like a shove. However, that was enough to make me step back.

Over the cliff.

I realized as I was pushed back—Lee Min-ju hadn’t hidden her brother’s rank for the purpose of betrayal. It was because he was a timid person who couldn’t adjust his emotions, who just happened to get his hands on a strong technique. This was my complete

mistake.

“Oppa!” Yang Su-jin cried out with dismay. I desperately swung my arms.

Kwaduk!

My fingers touched the cliff wall. Even though I activated Limiter Release, I could feel a lot of pressure on my fingers and arms. I had fallen almost seven metres before managing to grab onto the wall. The darkness was just a little further down.

Fortunately, the cliff wall was curved enough that I could climb it. I started going up the wall. Above me, the messy situation was still continuing. The turbulent sound of wind, screams, cries....

...And? I stopped when there was three metres left to the top. Then I carefully moved my hands and feet around the peak. After shifting approximately 15 degrees. I found Lee Min-ju.

“... Euh.” It was surprising that she was still breathing. Not only was there a mark around her throat, but her body was torn to rags from claws. It was clear that the lizardman had left her here, probably to eat her later. Lee Min-ju’s wand was also stuck on the wall. Whether it was because she heard a sound or from my shadow, her eyes turned towards me. I grasped her neck.

“Sorry.”

Crunch.

The already heavily injured neck bones were easily broken. The wand was already taken away from Lee Min-ju's body as she fell. A leech rose up and swallowed her dead body.

Spit.

It chewed a few times before spitting out the body. It was a picky b*stard.

[All the talents and experience of the loser will belong to the winner.]

[Murder Lv 4 -> Lv 5. Related abilities have increased.]

[Persuasion Lv 1 -> Lv 3. Related abilities have increased.]

[Stealth Lv 2 -> Lv 3. Related abilities have increased.]

[Deception Lv 3 -> Lv 4. Related abilities have increased.]

[Punching Lv 5. Level unchanged.]

[Pain Tolerance LV 6. Level unchanged.]

[Agility has exceeded the limit.]

[Agility: 11]

I drew the wand stuck to the wall.

[Wand: Glacier Breath. Equipment item. Rank D.]

[A wand containing the essence of the ice spirits of the North Sea. The processed sapphire at the end is a consumable that can't be recharged with normal magic power. However, the performance itself is exceptional. This luxury item from the North Sea is faithful to its purpose of self-defense as it is very easy to use.]

[Touch all five fingers to the groove in the centre and swing in a directly to instantly cool the air in front of you.]

[Current Balance: 16/25]

I put the wand in my mouth and started climbing the wall again. My direction was right behind the lizardman. It was the only place that wasn't affected by Lee Chang-ju's wind. I was able to grasp the rough situation with one glance. Lee Chang-ju was still confronting the lizardman.

There were the bodies of two of the captives on the ground. No one else was on the peak—they had gone down the stairs. The distance wasn't far.

“Ugh, die! Please! Please...” Lee Chang-ju seemed somewhat insane. No matter how angry he was, he should've realized how bad the situation was right now. But it was too late. The lizardman's gaze didn't move away from Lee Chang-ju. He would die if the wind stopped.

The blue bar above his head was already close to the bottom. I waited quietly. Finally, the wind stopped and the lizardman approached Lee Chang-ju. “Ah...”

There was the sound of wet pants falling to the ground. Through the legs of the lizardman, I could see the boy's legs hanging in the air. Soon, a tremendous amount of blood was flowing down his legs.

Many coins and a book dropped to the ground. The time had come. I ran behind the lizardman and shouted. “Here I am, you bastard!” I continuously waved the wand towards the lizardman. Since it was from a close distance, it seemed more painful than when Lee Min-ju used it.

[Glacier Breath. Activate. Current Balance: 15/25]

[Glacier Breath. Activate. Current Balance: 14/25]

[Glacier Breath. Activate. Current Balance: 13/25]

The effect was indeed awesome.

“Shaaaack!” The reptile screamed. Its rapidly freezing skin was cracking.

[Glacier Breath. Activate. Current Balance: 7/25]

[Glacier Breath. Activate. Current Balance: 6/25]

Once its legs were fully frozen, I put down the wand. I grabbed one leg and pulled with all my strength. The lizardman fell and the ice broke.

Kwajik!

It felt like frozen sashimi as I slammed my fist into its chest. I repeatedly hit it. After it was completely frozen or had died, letters of light appeared before me.

[Essence – Rock Lizard]

Chapter 23 – Day 6, 6th Floor Eating

[Essence – Rock Lizardman.]

[As long as the owner ‘grips’ it, muscle strength +2.]

[Increases HP regeneration by 100%. The rate of restoration will dramatically increased against injuries such as burns. There is a slight decrease in the base metabolic rate of the body. Grants immunity against various heat sensing abilities. Body’s resistance to cold is decreased. 50% more vulnerable to ice attacks.]

The first thing I felt was a change in temperature. “Huu.” Even though it wasn’t that cold, I felt like it was almost as cold as the beginning of winter. From now on, I couldn’t wear cheap padding or I would die.

The lizardman dropped 15 silver coins and a item that was similar to a lighter called the ‘Sun Stone,’ but that was all. There were also coins scattered around Lee Chang-ju’s remains. The book that fell to the ground... Ah, it wasn’t a book?

It looked like a thick book that would have hundreds of pages, but there were actually only a few pages. It was an eight page mini-booklet made of heavy leather pieces instead of paper. There were unknown letters carved on the outside. As he flipped through the booklet, the same type of letters filled the pages.

On the other side of the page was a man's palm-shaped groove etched into the thick leather. Should I place my palm there? ... No. I would hold off for now. It was too risky to use it right now when I didn't know its purpose.

I got up. I was sure that the other people would have heard the shouting just now. But they didn't come up. I thought about it and descended the stairs. The next moment, I felt my heart sinking in my chest.

"You came here to die." Yoo Su-jeong said with a wide smile. She was standing approximately 30 stairs away. Yang Su-jin groaned as a dagger was held to her neck.

"... What is this?" I spoke in a calm manner while calculating how long I had until this peak collapsed. It would happen in less than five minutes. It wasn't hard to grasp the circumstances.

Kim Ha-jong was holding a blade to Yang Su-jin's neck. Kwak Yu-han was overpowering the three lower ranked members, including Yoon Ji-hee.

"Did you kill the two above?" The two bodies collapsed on the peak were high ranking. Their deaths certainly weren't due to the lizardmen.

"It couldn't be helped. Those people, they secretly tried to descend when there was a gap. I killed one while Kwak Yu-han here murdered the other." Kwak Yu-han had a sour expression on

his face. I could roughly imagine her trick. She must have put a knife to the back of one person while yelling at Kwak Yu-han to kill the other.

Although he was confused, he swung his sword because Yoo Su-jeong was higher ranked. Kwak Yu-han avoided my eyes and muttered an excuse. “I thought you were dead. What could I do...?”

“That’s right. Everybody’s mental state is a little shaken. So this girl made a stupid choice.” Yoo Su-jeong lifted a bottle. It was the poison bottle that I had shared with Yang Su-jin. “She sneaked to the back and tried to splash us with this. It is a shame that I knew what would happen ahead of time. It was lucky.”

Yang Su-jin’s bottle was like the one I had used on the leader of the other group. “Just a little while ago, I explained it. You colluded with this girl to kill us and I was threatened so I had no choice.”

“...” Kwak Yu-han and Kim Ha-jong made strange expressions. They understood Yoo Su-jeong. Even if it fit to a certain degree, the two people didn’t believe 100% of her words. But the important thing was the flow. In the short time I was ‘dead,’ they had already joined Yoo Su-jeong’s side.

Anyway, it was just a temporary team. There was no need to bother with words. Kwak Yu-han and Kim Ha-jong’s posture showed that they were aiming this way. “You better not come down. If you do, all three of us will fight to the death.”

Yoo Su-jeong pushed Yoon Ji-hee forward. She was the ‘most rubbish’ so she was used as bait. “Let’s win together. I will give this girl to Hee-chul and you can go down the other stairs. Okay?”

Instead of answering, I raised an index finger. Then I pointed it at Kim Ha-jong. “... Is it decided that you will kill Yang Su-jin?”

“... Yes.” Kwak Yu-han and Yoo Su-jeong had both already killed one person. So this would somewhat maintain the balance between the three of them.

“Then what are you waiting for?”

“Wha...t?”

“If you are going to eat her talent then just cut her neck right there. Why, do you feel sorry because you saw that I survived?” I spoke without thinking and it seemed correct to some extent.

Yoo Su-jeong glared at Kim Ha-jong. “Kill her. Now.”

“No...”

“Cut her! Aren’t you going to eat? Or do you want me to eat her instead?”

“...”

“Cut!” Kim Ha-jong gritted his teeth and moved his blade.

Seokeok.

It was a smooth slice and Yang Su-jin’s head rolled down the stairs. As everyone’s gaze followed her head, I jumped down the stairs.

“...!” I aimed for Kim Ha-jong who was standing at the front. I grabbed his head and kneed him in the face with all my weight behind it. Quite tasty.

As something broke,

[All the talents and experience of the loser will belong to the winner.]

Letters rose up. They described the talents that I had absorbed from Kim Ha-jong, but there was no time to examine each one.

[Agility has exceeded the limit.]

[Agility: 12]

[Reflexes has exceeded the limit.]

[Reflexes: 14]

[Muscle strength has exceeded the limit.]

[Muscle strength: 13]

[Health has exceeded the limit.]

[Health: 12]

I saw something flying at the edge of my vision and moved my head to avoid the bottle.

One of the bottom three screamed as the bottle hit them. I hoped it wasn't Yoon Ji-hee but I was too busy countering Yoo Su-jeong's daggers.

Rattle!

It was obviously a proper hit, but the feeling on the other end of my fist was quite subtle. It felt like Yoo Su-jeong's body had disappeared the moment I struck. Then someone embraced me from behind-Kwak Yu-han. He was really strong. He tried to lift me with his arms, but I put strength into my legs and resisted.

The next moment, something cold touched my abdomen.

[Current Balance: 192/256]

“Hah...” Yoo Su-jeong appeared in front of me with a wild smile. As she drew her dagger back to strike me in the stomach again, I spat in her face.

“Kyak!” Yoo Su-jeong flinched for a moment and gritted her teeth.

I was in a disadvantageous situation but in the end, Kwak Yuhan’s strength was weaker than mine. By using all my strength, the arms around me were released.

I could finish him off, but I instead chose to move forward. I aimed towards Yoo Su-jeong who was wiping the spit off her face. She was capable of disappearing every time she was hit, but I thought it would be okay if I grabbed her.

“Ugh!” In fact, this wasn’t a skill from Ravenous Wolf Fist, but one I saw from wrestling. She became off balance and fell down along with me.

As I predicted, we fell exactly into the darkness. Before my dizzy vision could recover, I felt something moist and enormous wrap around my body.

I was swallowed by a leech. It was disgusting as I felt my whole body being dragged down. But it wasn't like I couldn't move my body. I took out the 'Sun Stone' from my inventory. It was the stone that I got from the lizardman chieftain.

As described in the explanation, once pressure was applied, the stone would start to shine and emit the temperature of boiled water. Then the body of the leech became visible.

"..." The first thing I saw was Yoo Su-jeong. In fact, I was a little worried because I couldn't hear her screaming. Maybe I was the only one swallowed, but that wasn't the case. Yoo Su-jeong had also been swallowed.

However, unlike me, she was being 'eaten.' There were thousands of reddish black hairs surrounding and wrapped around her body. They penetrated her skin and entered her blood vessels. In a short amount of time, many hairs had entered and half her body was filled with black lines.

"...Ah..." Yoo Su-jeong's wide eyes stared at me. She reached out like she was asking me to save her...

I responded to the call. I was safe. It had been a gamble, but one I thought I could try. After acquiring the immunity to 'heat detection methods' from the lizardman essence, I thought that the leeches wouldn't recognize me as prey. But there was also a problem.

Kuuong.

The hairs around me were shaking and pushing me away from Yoo Su-jeong. It perceived me as unable to be eaten and was spitting me out. Of course, it was a good thing, but I should at least kill Yoo Su-jeong.

I grabbed the hairs with my hand and reached out towards Yoo Su-jeong, but I wasn't the only one moving. Yoo Su-jeong was being pulled deeper into the body.

I tried to somehow grab her neck but... In the end, Yoo Su-jeong disappeared from my sight. Instead, I could feel something cold in my hands after desperately fumbling for her body. A ring? I placed it in my inventory and pulled out something else.

Elmer's Dummy Destroyer. It was the only cutting instrument that I had. I cut the hairs with the blade while using Limiter Release. The hairs shook. Blood gushed from them as they were sliced apart.

I put my hand in that gap. The leech also felt pain so the gloves became more effective. I grasped something in my strong grip.

The hairs shook even more violently. As more blood poured out, I could feel that some hairs had penetrated my skin. Even if it couldn't suck my blood, the hairs perceived me as a threat and was attacking to remove me.

[Current Balance: 182/256]

[Current Balance: 169/256]

I tore the area in front of me open. Again and again... Oh, I could taste it. I was almost suffocating due to all the blood coming from the torn hairs.

[Current Balance: 42/256]

As the disgusting blood entered my throat and nose, I desperately sought some air. Then a light shone in front of me.

[Essence – Shadow Leech]

Chapter 24 – Day 6, 6th Floor Closing

[You are in a bleeding state. Health will decrease by 9 every minute.]

[Current Balance: 39/256]

The leeches had enzymes to prevent the clotting of blood. Blood constantly poured from the holes caused by the hairs. I moved my limbs and exited the stomach of the dead leech. The blood stopped flowing once the leech died, but the hairs were still stiff and weighed me down.

Puk!

Cold air touched my outstretched hands. My fingers touched the end of a stair. Lucky. In fact, I had been worried about the leech falling off the stairs. I took out my other arm, head, torso and legs and stepped on the stairs. I wiped off the sticky blood and mucus covering my eyes.

The first thing I saw was Yang Su-jin's head. Her neck hadn't grown yet, so it was just her head as she watched me with wide eyes. Her mouth that didn't have a voice, urgently mouthed something.

‘Front.’

I immediately formed a X with my arms. A kick from the front hit my guard.

[Bleeding – Anemia. Health will decrease by 9 every minute.]

[Current Balance: 19/256]

I was pushed back from the shock, but the carcass of the leech on the stairs became a cushion so I didn't receive any damage. I lowered my guard and looked at Kwak Yu-han.

“...” He was looking at me with shock.

Don't make such an expression. If he was trying to kill someone, don't make a face that says 'I didn't want to betray you.' I'd rather accept an apology by eating him.

“Hup!” Kwak Yu-han became fired up and his arms swelled up like a gorilla. This was a technique. The attack started straight away. I wasn't even given time to drink a potion.

Despite his arms becoming swollen, his speed didn't seem to slow down at all as it moved through the air with a hissing sound. It was impossible for me to avoid it since the leech carcass was under my feet.

I read the trajectory of the arm flying towards me and caught it.

It looked like both hands were clasped together. In a flash, the battle turned into a contest of power.

[Muscle strength: 15]

Indeed, he was strong. It was a tight situation even with the strength obtained from Kim Ha-jong and amplified by Limiter Release. Kwak Yu-han's arm started to twitch. It was obvious that he couldn't maintain this technique for long.

Originally, I would hold on until the time ran out but...

“...” Kwak Yu-han quickly glanced at the top of my head. It was at my HP Bar that was still dwindling.

[Bleeding – Anemia. Health will decrease by 9 every minute.]

[Current Balance: 12/256]

This was a limitation for me so I had to make a decision. “... I’m sorry.” He said those words. I immediately kicked his side.

Peok!

His body shook and the HP Bar decreased slightly. However, Kwak Yu-han stayed upright. He was able to withstand it. I repeated the kicks. One hit. Two hits. Three hits. After the fourth time, Kwak Yu-han's eyes finally shook. It wasn't because of the impact. He had finally noticed.

Something was increasing 'quickly.'

"Are you still sorry?" I asked.

"...?"

[A bleeding state. Health will decrease by 9 every minute.]

[Current Balance: 32/256]

He shook due to the confusion. Thanks to this, I was able to kick his chin. Naturally, it reduced the HP by a lot more than kicking his side.

[Blood has been sucked according to the damage. 21 health has been recovered.]

I was receiving more health.

[Essence – Shadow Leech.]

[Absorbs 30% of the damage done to the opponent as HP.]

[Increases the amount of health reduced by ‘bleeding’ by 50%. Bleeding duration and difficulty will increase by 100%.]

[The command ‘Darkness Cloud’ consumes five health per second, allowing you to cover your field of view with a darkness that only you can see in.]

[50% increase to bleeding damage.]

[Once HP is below 20%, you will become ‘anemic’ and all stats will reduce by 15%, in addition to the symptoms caused by a lack of blood.]

“There is a shortage of blood.” Kwak Yu-han stared at me with innocent and confused eyes. I raised my chin one more time. As he stared at me wide-eyed, the power in his arms was released.

“I’m sorry.” I indifferently returned the apology that I received before.

Peok! Bam bam bam!

I punched his belly multiple times and he staggered. Kwak Yuhan's health fell to the bottom. Thanks to Blood-sucking, I recovered a lot of HP and was able to recover from the jaws of death.

[Cartography. Lv 5 -> Lv 6. Related abilities have increased.]

[Pain Tolerance. Lv 6 -> Lv 7. Related abilities have increased.]

[Grappling. Lv 1 -> Lv 5. Related abilities have increased.]

[Murder. Lv 5 -> Lv 6. Related abilities have increased.]

[Punching Lv 6. Level unchanged.]

[Compulsion. Lv 4. Level unchanged.]

[Spatial perception has exceeded its limit.]

[Spatial perception: 11]

[Concentration has exceeded its limit.]

[Concentration: 13]

[Muscle strength has exceeded its limit.]

[Muscle strength: 14]

[Sense of balance has exceeded its limit.]

[Sense of balance: 11]

I pulled a medicine bottle from my inventory and drank it. I looked at the top of the stairs. The three low ranking men and women were there.

“... Sob.” There was a small cry. It was Yoon Ji-hee. She was being strangled when I emerged. The other two were already breathless.

“Hey.”

“Hi... Hik.” She closed her eyes and reacted as I stretched out a hand to her.

“Hey, it’s me.”

“Kyak!”

... Indeed, it was natural that she wouldn’t feel relieved. My whole body was scarred and covered in blood and saliva. However, there was no time to let her intimidation die down. I grabbed Yoon

Ji-hee's arm and dragged her up.

"I-It hurts."

"If it hurts then stop blubbering and stand on your own." I turned back towards the bottom of the stairs.

Before I knew it, Yang Su-jin's upper body had been restored. She was turned towards this side and her eyes were asking 'is it over?'

"Are you shy now?"

"... What are you...? Don't look as much as you can. I am going to take off my clothes."

Then I turned her head without touching her neck. I quickly stripped off my clothes. If I thought about it, Yang Su-jin's body was covered but she was essentially naked. I didn't know if it was funny or creepy.

If I acted in this situation then I would be a real pervert. By the time I finished changing clothes, most of Yang Su-jin's body had regenerated.

"That is fast."

"I can slow down my regeneration rate. I was in a decapitated state so there was no point in regenerating right away."

“... You should have regenerated when being stabbed earlier.”

“Ah, I held my hand to be chest and still pretended to be hurt. Aren’t I a genius?” Was she really calling herself a genius?

“That... Excuse me...” Yoon Ji-hee approached me.

“That, can I go down first?” The darkness of the leeches was lifted and they could see the peak that the staircase led to. The staircase to the seventh floor leading down from the peak was there.

“What about the deal?”

“That... Please tell me later... I can’t stay here anymore...” She showed a nauseous expression at the end of her words. There were dead bodies, blood and mucus strewn all over the place. I winced and nodded.

“Then go down first and headed to the student union dining room tomorrow afternoon. 1 p.m. If you don’t, I will kill you on the seventh floor.”

“I-I’ll come. I will definitely come.” She ran down the stairs as soon as she received permission. She gave a small scream as she stepped on the carcass of a leech and Yang Su-jin shook her head with disbelief.

“Why is she still alive?”

“There is a reason.”

“I heard you talking as you came down... Is she the daughter of a wealthy house?” She was sharp.

“You heard that?”

“I was listening. Well... It is because I care.”

“...” I got goose bumps.

“If she doesn’t give big money directly then... No, isn’t it better to just kill her? I think that she will just be a burden.” Yang Su-jin made a grumpy expression.

“When I was in the decapitated state, I looked at the weak people... They didn’t even think of resisting. That woman will 100% be a cancer, a cancer.”

“You might really get cancer as karma.”

“Fine, then she is a sweet potato?” Yoon Ji-hee had disappeared down the staircase heading to the seventh floor. The stairs were still falling down so we should head down quickly... I searched through the corpse of the leech.

“What are you looking for?”

“...” I found what I was looking for in the lower part of the body. I approached it and wielded my sword with all my strength. The firm, hard skin was torn and the thing inside was revealed.

“...” I could hear Yang Su-jin sucking in a deep breath. Despite being beheaded, she was still capable of being shocked. Yoo Su-jeong was almost like a living corpse. Her eyes were staring blankly into the air and were discoloured like the pigment had been sucked out of it.

“...Ah...”

“Euh. Finish it quickly. I feel bad.” Yang Su-jin spoke quickly as she gazed at Yoo Su-jeong. I grabbed Yang Su-jin’s wrist.

“Why? Just start eating. First...”

“You eat her.” Yang Su-jin’s eyes widened. Just like last time when she received the essence of the goblins, she made a face like she couldn’t believe it..

“You are giving her to me? Really?”

“Didn’t you say it? She is cancer.” In order to continue the partnership in the future, Yang Su-jin should have more capabilities. There was no guarantee that she wouldn’t be separated from me in between. Even though her method was

brutal, Yoo Su-jeong was the ‘woman’ who reached the third rank. It seemed appropriate to have Yang Su-jin eat her talents.

Well, she also helped and in the meantime, I wanted to continue making a good impression on her.

“Oh yes!” Yang Su-jin cheered and pulled out a bottle from the inventory. She looked back to see how long she had until the stairs would collapse and poured the bottle on Yoo Su-jeong’s face.

“Ah... Euhhhhhh!!!!” An incredible scream emerged.

“I don’t remember that. Is it poison?”

“Nope. This is vinegar.” Indeed, the smell was familiar.

“It looks like it hurts a lot... Oh, are you wondering why I am enjoying this? It is payback for stabbing me twice with the knife earlier.”

“I see.” Well, as long as I wasn’t the one receiving it... I waited silently.

“The stairs are almost collapsed.”

“Yep.” Yang Su-jin threw the empty bottle of vinegar away and kicked Yoo Su-jeong. Yoo Su-jeong’s two daggers and some coins fell just as the staircase was about to collapse. It was a close call,

but we arrived at the peak.

[6th floor clear.]

Chapter 25 – Day 7, Family

“Ah ~ I want to take a leave of absence.” Su-yeon came out after the test and stretched. Was it better than the ‘I want to commit suicide’ they’d muttered when studying for the test?

Dong-wook looked around at all of us and said meaningfully, “Everybody has suffered, so let’s meet again for the re-test.”

“Don’t say such unlucky things!” Su-yeon huffed angrily and Dong-wook just chuckled before looking at me.

“But Hee-chul, did you solve the problems?”

“Yes. Why?”

“I saw you during the middle of the test. You were leaning back in your chair and turning your pen.”

Ah, that. “I have a lot to think about these days.”

“You were thinking during the test?” The gazes of the two people turned towards me.

Whoops. I added an excuse. “But I was checking over the problems. There was still time left after.”

“...”

“...” Their expressions became more pronounced.

“... Oppa.”

“Huh?”

“I just want to say that Oppa is like a character who appeared from a drama.”

“A very unfortunate guy. I feel like you are the type of snobby person who will raise your index finger to fix your glasses.” Dong-wook assisted Su-yeon in teasing me and he hit my shoulder while laughing.

“Your attempt wasn’t bad, but you should put more effort into acting. Hey. It is creepy, not funny.” I couldn’t help but laugh and then stayed silent while Su-yeon and Dong-wook talked about the test.

“But it was really difficult. Today’s test.”

“Well. Let’s see... I don’t know if there will be anybody who exceeds 40 points. I skipped problem number seven.”

“I missed seven and nine...” I was satisfied with the result. I hadn’t realized it was difficult at all. As I told Dong-wook, I finished the test with approximately 1/3rd of the time left.

Concentration helped, but the biggest factor was Mental Image.

Drawing out notes in my brain was faster than using my hands and I could see it clearly. Thanks to that, I was able to sort out my thoughts several times faster than usual. “Anyway, now the hard work is over so we should party. Shall we go to P-X?”

“Let’s do it!”

“I already have a prior engagement.” I pointed to the student cafeteria. “I’m eating lunch with someone.”

“Huh? Who?”

I thought for a moment before picking the appropriate answer.
“Just a friend I know.”

Just a friend I know. She was easy to find, and I couldn’t help but laugh as soon as I saw her.

She was occupying a place in the crowded student cafeteria without a plate in front of her. The people around her were glaring, but she couldn’t see because her head was bowed. It was more like she had no idea rather than being shameless.

“Excuse me.”

“H-H-Hello...”

“Let’s go outside. We shouldn’t interfere with the people wanting to sit.”

“...Ah.” I took her to a corner of the campus. It was a cafe in a graduate school research centre. There was no one eating lunch here.

“Now, tell me.”

“I-I can give you money.”

“And?” I raised an eyebrow. Was that all? Of course, the easiest method of give and take was through money. “How much and in what manner will you give it to me?”

“...” Had she not thought about this? Of course, I didn’t intend to receive just a few pennies.

It wouldn’t be an issue if it was just lending money between friends. Frankly, I didn’t know a lot about huge donations. I lived alone and never received any unearned income. I knew that ordinary people like me were scared to receive large amounts of money without any cost. However, that answer was taken care of when the other person was the child of a big company.

“Can’t you just blindly give me money? First of all, can I get 100 million in cash now?”

“N-Not right now...” I stood up. Indeed, I was also naive. Was it due to the fantasy of a chaebol? (chaebol= type of family run business conglomerate)

The rumours about Yoon Ji-hee weren’t that good. Her skills weren’t good enough to go to the best university in Korea or to study overseas- so she bought her way into our private university through the method known as ‘rich selection.’

Still, I thought she would study and have a certain amount of intelligence. I didn’t think she would be this stupid. “I’ll see you at midnight.” It wasn’t a threat, it was just an end to the conversation. I would take it as she had no influence within her family.

Her answer was quick. “W-wait a minute.”

Deopsseok.

Yoon Ji-hee’s hand grabbed my wrist, though without much force. We were currently in reality, not the dungeon. I no longer had any business with her here. “I need to talk to my mother.”

“...” She still listened to her mother?

“Are you one of those people whose mother checks on them every

night?”

“S-She knows.”

“What?

“My mother knows. And Grandfather...” I turned back to Yoon Ji-hee.

“Are they also inside the dungeon?”

“Nope. That isn’t it... Yesterday, my grandfather called all my siblings and cousins...” Someone who had reached the 5th day in the dungeon had reported all of it to her grandfather. It wasn’t difficult to prove it. They had held on for five days, so they would either have an item or an excellent talent.

Yoon Sang-gyu, the currently head of the UZ Group, collected all his grandchildren and their parents, and gave them the edict: ‘It doesn’t matter what you do in there. The next leader of the UZ Group will be handed over to the last person who remains.’

“So, how many people are there?”

“Five people including me...”

“Will you take out the other four to become chairman of the group?”

“I-I hadn’t thought about it specifically. But... It doesn’t seem to be a big deal since they won’t die... So my mother...” No, I guessed that it was already a big deal in her house. My mind was reeling the moment I heard the situation.

I thought I had caught a tuna with my fishing rod, only to find a whale underneath. The scale was much larger than I thought. Instead of leaving the cafe, I ordered a sandwich from the counter.

“I’ll buy it for you...”

“It’s done. Just eat.” I filled my empty stomach and continued to question her. “How many of your cousins and siblings didn’t enter the dungeon?”

“Just one. He was born late so he is only five years old...” A chaebol was definitely different. Five of the six grandchildren had entered the dungeon. From one perspective, the UZ Group wasn’t a big deal. The fact that Yoon Ji-hee was in front of me proved that.

Of course, if one of them completed the dungeon then the next UZ chairman would be a superhuman. But what if they didn’t clear it? Except for the five year old who wasn’t grown yet, the next chairman might be someone with no desires.

“If I go to Mother then she might do something. I don’t know... The way that my uncle is treating the others...”

“The others?”

“Ah... I met my cousin on the fifth floor. I heard that he recruited real people in reality.” No, this story was none of my business. Yoon Ji-hee was obviously used as a bait on the 6th floor.

“What happened?”

“I-I hadn’t thought about it until the fifth floor. My other cousins are also meeting and gathering people in real life.”

“...”

“I couldn’t trust them so I went down to the 6th floor alone. Then I met you and... You said I would die if I lied...”

“...” Looking at this, who would believe that she was a chaebol? I drank the soda that came with the sandwich. It was a cup full of carbonated juice, but I was still thirsty. Yang Su-jin’s words were correct–this was ‘real.’ She was just an ordinary girl, not a member of a chaebol.

She was someone whose siblings and cousins wouldn’t have wanted on the same team. Still, the chaebols had taken advantage of their power.

I had received one unwelcome piece of information: there was a combination of top players in the dungeon. At least four of them were tied together by money and power in reality.

The UZ Group wasn't the only chaebol. Also, chaebols weren't the only ones who could mobilize money and power. I rubbed my temples with both hands. I couldn't say anything else as Yoon Ji-hee stared at me with a worried expression.

Then the cafe door opened and I heard a shaky sound. Hup. Yoon Ji-hee sucked in her breath. Many footsteps entered the cafe, and the voice of a female was heard. "Unni! You were here!"

"Sang-ah..." I didn't turn around. The amazed expression on Yoon Ji-hee's face told me roughly who the owners of the footsteps behind me were. "S-Sang-min oppa... What brings you here...?"

"Didn't Grandfather say that we didn't need to go to school or work for a while? I was just going for a long drive. Then I saw Unni here." This wasn't a crowded place—it was a cafe on a corner of the campus. It was impossible to just 'pass by' the building.

They must have followed Yoon Ji-hee here, or perhaps they were using direct surveillance. It was only natural to keep an eye on their competitors. "Who is this? Can we join you?"

"That... Right now, we are having an important discussion..."

"Ah! Someone you met in the dungeon?" The female clapped her hands. The male, Sang-min, still hadn't talked. I just chewed on the rest of my sandwich.

“Unni is trying to make a contract... But what are you going to offer for the contract? I heard that you don’t have a lot of money these days. Grandfather also won’t give you any.”

The voice was sufficient to determine that Yoon Ji-hee was the female’s meal. “Well, I am going first. I’ll see you later.” I said to Yoon Ji-hee and got up. As I turned around, I saw the faces of a male and female.

Yoon Sang-ah was approximately 20 years old. Yoon Sang-min was a man in his late 20’s. I could tell they were siblings with one glance. Behind them, there were people glancing this way.

They didn’t seem to be bodyguards. They were all wearing plain clothes. There was a variety of men and women of different ages. I memorized those faces. It was unlikely that I would only see them again in reality.

“Hello!” Yoon Sang-ah bowed and greeted me. “Are you a student of this school? What is your name?”

“It is a little difficult to tell you.” I spoke as politely as possible. Even if they didn’t follow me after this, it was hard to confront a chaebol. Instead, I tried to go straight to the exit.

“If you haven’t formed an agreement yet, come here. I can offer you 100% more than what Unni did.”

“I will think about it.”

“Is there any need to think? You won’t receive this offer again.” Yoon Sang-ah blocked my path.

“We have a company. It is like an affiliate. If you accept then I can hire you within an hour. You will receive a ‘salary’ without needing to go to work.” Certainly, it was 100 times better than her cousin’s offer. “You don’t have to do a lot. When you go to the next floor, just take Ji-hee unni out.”

“W-What does that mean!?” Yoon Ji-hee exclaimed but Yoon Sang-ah just laughed.

“Why? Isn’t it an efficient method? Unni tried to buy this person so the answer is simple.” Her expression changed with the next words. “Unni is already stupid, so is it a bad thing?”

“Euh...” Well. This was one thing I agreed with, so I had nothing to say. I raised my hand and brought it to Yoon Sang-ah’s shoulder. “If you are finished, then please let me pass. This is the testing period.”

“... Didn’t you understand my offer? I can repeat it again.”

“No. I understood.”

She didn’t seem to care about how much Yoon Sang-ah ‘offered.’ I raised one finger. “One billion.”

“What?”

“By today. Can you ensure that I receive one billion won legally and without looking suspicious?” I could tell just by looking at her facial expression– she looked at me like I was crazy. The problem wasn’t just the amount.

It didn’t matter. “It is no use if you can’t afford that.” I slowly pushed Yoon Sang-ah out of the way.

“There is nothing to talk about.”

Chapter 26 – Day 7, Alley

One billion won. I used to think about it often. When I was a high school student, I didn't have a lot at home, so I thought about the things I wanted to have.

After going to college, I had to wear the same old clothes that I had worn for many years, and realized that the things my friends enjoyed were a luxury to me. Just... I didn't need anything. I just hoped for a little more money. At least, it used to be like that.

“Hey, do you have your bankbook?”

Yoon Sang-ah stared at me with a confused expression. “I don’t understand what you are saying right now...” She didn’t know exactly, but she could roughly guess.

“Legitimate. By today. One billion won. Don’t you understand?”

“This frustrating guy...” The man, Yoon Sang-min, opened his mouth for the first time.

“It’s to avoid being pursued by the law, my proposal won’t be a problem. Is there any reason to refuse my terms?”

“There will be a record.”

He gave an answer right away.

“There will be an inquiry when you get a job, so it will just be seen as a dubious monthly salary.”

“So?”

“I don’t know what type of life I will live in the future, but I don’t want to do anything.”

I could hear some laughter. The other people sitting in the cafe were laughing at me.

“You can become a big person.”

“Maybe you can even run for President.” They spoke nonsense as they laughed, but I didn’t bother looking at them. I just studied Yoon Sang-min.

“So legally. I want a clean one billion.”

“It’s awkward. The reality is that there’s no way to satisfy the condition of giving you one billion by today. If those conditions...”

“Then I guess I have to refuse. Realistically.” I shook my head. Many eyes looked at me like I was crazy as I opened the door to the cafe.

I could hear Yoon Sang-ah from behind me. “How funny. A

beggar wearing a t-shirt is going around like he's some big shot."

Laughter burst out. I kept moving. One billion won. It wasn't a small amount of money. With that amount of money, I could live a life of ease. So why did I refuse now that it came into my hands?

What if it wasn't one billion, but five billion or ten billion? Maybe I would've been satisfied.

That was before entering the dungeon. I was different now. I have become physically stronger. I was a little smarter and more willing to take action.

And I would be even better in the future. I had to continue for as long as possible. Until the day when it was impossible for me to struggle any longer. The words I said to Yoo Sang-min and Yoo Sang-ah were true. I hadn't been talking nonsense.

It would be good if they 'gave' all that money to me. Then I would be able to stop along the way and smell the roses.

But not anymore. A long road stretched in front of me. I would do the things I wanted to do. I would walk the path I chose and be successful. To the me right now, one billion wasn't enough as a goal.

I walked out and left the campus. I had to wait a bit for the next step.

Late at night. I was walking down a street when I received a message.

-If you are alone now then you should contact me.

The call came straight away.

-H-hello? This is Yoon Ji-hee.

It was the number that she gave on the way to the cafe.

-Excuse me... So the money...

“Please give me the cell phone number.” Yoon Ji-hee swallowed her breath. The number shouldn’t be repeated twice.

“If you let me know, then I will protect you on the assumption that there won’t be any problems with my safety in the future.”

-S-still...

“If you do not want to die...” I hung up and waited. Three minutes later, I received a message. I entered the phone number I received and took a breath. I closed my eyes before pressing the call button. The ring tone continued for a while.

-Who is this?

I heard the voice of an elderly man. “I called about a matter regarding one of your grandchildren. Yoon Ji-hee.”

- ... This is a number that is only used in my family. Did Ji-hee give it to you?

The old man’s voice was grumpy. “Yes. I sincerely asked Yoon Ji-hee to tell me. It is a condition to escort Yoon Ji-hee inside the dungeon.” There was a moment of silence. Then Chairman Yoon Sang-gyu spoke again.

-I made it clear to my grandchildren. No matter what the children do in there, I decided not to intervene.

The old man spoke in a feeble voice, but the weight behind his words was fierce. Was it to make the opponent shrink back from the weakness?

-So I can’t give you anything. I think it is better for you to hang up.

Of course, I already knew that. Yoon Sang-ah told Yoon Ji-hee that she was acting on her own behalf, not on UZ Group’s. “I’ll didn’t call Chairman-nim for nothing.” I calmed the trembling in my chest and spoke. “I will protect your granddaughter. I will do my best and she will be the one who stays until the end.”

-You and Ji-hee? What is the relationship?

“Until yesterday, we had no affiliation.” The chairman didn’t hang up. Okay. Then I would continue. “Even if you don’t intervene, I don’t think you have a lot of expectations for Yoon Ji-hee. I met three of your grandchildren today, but I could clearly see who would die first.” From here on, I cut to the chase and pulled the pin from the hypothetical grenade.

“But Yoon Ji-hee will survive the longest. If only one of your grandchildren is left, it will be Yoon Ji-hee.”

-Why?

“She has me.” I heard a faint laugh.

-In other words, the grandchild that has you... Perhaps Sang-ah and Sang-min... You are better than those children.

“Yes. I am the ace in the hole. The two of them... Even if they have the people that they’ve already gathered, I will still win.”

-Hrmm.

“In addition, none of your grandchildren are better than me. So naturally, Ji-hee will stay the longest.” What did I want? I said it first before the old man could ask. “As you said, you won’t be giving me anything right now. Anyway, if my words are proven correct...”

-You won't need to ask for anything since I will do it.

The old man's voice was filled with laughter. Yes. He was right. If Yoon Ji-hee survive longer than any of her siblings or cousins, it meant she would be the successor of the UZ Group. And I would have been responsible for the safety of the successor.

"I just wanted you to know. This is your insurance against damage. Even in the worst situation where the dungeon surpasses the ability of your grandchildren, it is insurance that at least once grandchild survives." The next moment, the old man's loud laugh entered my ears.

-That is fine.

"Thank you."

-Yes, then should I call the other children and tell them not to hurt Ji-hee and the person who is calling?

Goose bumps formed on my spine. I hadn't said it yet.

-Sang-min more than Sang-ah... That child feels a desperate sense of urgency. I've told him several times to be vigilant to other parties. I can't stop him.

"..." Even though there was no hope, I wanted him to keep his

grandchildren in check, at least in reality. It was for my personal safety rather than Yoon Ji-hee's. I knew he was going to say that.

-Ah. Don't worry about it. This business is okay. Free insurance. It is free so I will take care of it.

“Thank you.”

- I personally feel sorry for Ji-hee since she isn't the type to make an active move or to play dirty. Tomorrow, I will tell the children. Now, is that all? Can I hang up?

“That's it. Thank you for listening to my words.” Just before the call was disconnected, the old man suddenly spoke.

-I haven't heard your name.

“Ah...”

-Well... It doesn't really matter right now. I don't know about later, but there is no point knowing your name now.

I heard a short laugh.

-Then, work hard.

The call was disconnected.

“... Hah.” I let out a long breath. I did it. I hadn’t stuttered, nor did my voice shake, despite my heart racing quickly. With lighter footsteps, I entered an alley lined with buildings.

As re-development proceeded in this area, more than half the buildings were empty. There were places where the streetlights had gone out. It was annoying during the day, but it was even worse at night. I stood in front of a building and examined the mailbox installed outside the entrance.

“You’re living in a place like this?” I turned around to see several people in the side alley. The alley on the other side had people as well.

“It’s surprising. I didn’t think such a great person would live in a place like this.”

“Originally, great people are frugal. Can’t you tell by looking at his t-shirt?” They moved forward and narrowed the distance. Two people on the left. Two people on the right.

They were people that I saw at the cafe—those who followed Yoon Sang-ah and Yoon Sang-min.

“Who sent you?” I could roughly guessed but I asked anyway.

“Wah, did you hear? He asked ‘who sent you?’ I just now realized it was a drama.”

“I have goose bumps.” The tallest of the two on the right spat out.

“You never know. You didn’t want money so we came to persuade you in another way.”

“Are you planning to use violence?” I raised my head and looked around.

“Well, in some cases... It’s as I thought. This neighbourhood looks pretty good. No one seems to be here, and there doesn’t seem to be proper CCTV.” There was a guy who was already shadow boxing in the air.

“Whatever happens, it is because you angered the people behind us. You shouldn’t have rejected them.”

“... I see.”

“Wah. Look at that calm expression. As expected from a great person.” They were getting closer and closer.

“If you’re scared then why don’t you rush into your house, lock the door and call the police? Of course, we already know the location of your house so we will always be here. I saw the mailbox you were looking at. You’re not very smart, are you?”

Indeed. I took out my gloves.

“What? Do you plan to fight?”

“It looks like it. What should we do?”

“Then let’s call the police.” They wouldn’t do such a thing. If the police came to catch me then they would get caught as well. I didn’t think that Yoon Ji-hee would get a lawyer for me.

So... They picked this place.

“The police wouldn’t believe it anyway.”

This neighbourhood wasn’t where I lived. Of course, this building wasn’t mine. The mailbox that I was looking at also had nothing to do with me.

“Eng?”

“What did you say?” There was no one else around. The lighting was dim. It was an area where the CCTV was underdeveloped. I had searched for a suitable place during the daytime.

“Hey, grab him.” They headed towards me at the same time. I twisted my neck and chanted something in my head.

Activate. Darkness Cloud.

A darkness that was darker than the night wrapped around us.

Chapter 27 – Day 7, Preparations

The blood vessels in my whole body felt tight. It was like the pain when donating blood, amplified by 10 times. There wasn't a physical HP Bar above my head or a message in front of me. It was different from the letters that popped up when looking at an item.

“W-what?” Four confused voices echoed in the darkness. The range of darkness was just as I thought. It was the same range of vision like in the dungeon. I aimed my fist at the closest one. The blitz tactic was the key. I didn't know what variables the four opponents had so it was best to utilize the advantage of surprise.

Bam!

As soon as the guy collapsed from being hit in the stomach, the one next to him swung a club at me. He couldn't see, but it seemed like he was responding accurately and quickly to the sound. Of course, it was a blind hit but it might work because it was a pincer attack.

I moved my head, grabbed his wrist and pulled back his arm. There was the sound of something breaking. Every time I dealt a blow, the pain in my blood vessels gradually faded. The blood-sucking effect worked without any problems.

There was the feeling of someone kicking me from behind, but I gritted my teeth and withstood it. The pain was severe but I could endure it. I turned around. This time the kick was a bit higher. However, it missed and the leg moved to the side, causing the

person to stumble.

The remaining person didn't come directly. He hesitated while holding a bottle in his hand. It was because a disaster could happen when it missed unlike the colleagues who swung a fist. The person was only a few steps away, so I killed my footsteps and approached immediately.

I grabbed the bottle and lightly kicked his testicles. The problem was the next step. Their shouts and screams rang through the alley. There was no guarantee that someone wouldn't exercise their courage.

I quickly dragged them to a building that was being redeveloped. As I entered through the tarps covering the outer wall of the building, there was nothing to be seen.

"If a sound leaks out of your throat then you will die." Of course, I was bluffing. There were grunts as I punched three of them in the abdomen. The one left was the supposed leader.

He was the one watching me quietly. I pinched the flesh on the inside of his forearm with my index finger and thumb, then twisted it painfully.

Quark!

"Ugh...!"

I didn't know how powerful my grip was after being influenced by the lizardman essence, but he received pain when I used only a little bit of my power.

“What is my name?” I saw this in a novel. The detective said that asking questions like ‘what is your name?’ made it harder to hide their thoughts instead of yes or no questions.

“I-I don’t know! We just followed...”

“That is enough. Be quiet.” From here on, I was going to test the talents and techniques I acquired in the dungeon. How efficient were ‘Compulsion’, ‘Eloquence’ and ‘Charisma’?

“Kim Sung-tae. Lee Ji-hwan. Kim Sung-ik. Jang Hyo-jin.” I took out their cell phones, removed the batteries, and read their names on the ID cards in their wallets. I read the addresses written below. It was significant.

“A-Are you crazy? This isn’t the dungeon... We didn’t plan anything other than a simple assault. Killing us is too much. Our instructions were just to scare you a little...”

“Of course, those are just words.” I tried to laugh like a psycho as much as possible. The effect was obvious. Even though I didn’t say the word ‘kill’ myself, they had already imagined a snuff film in their minds. The leader’s name was Kim Sung-tae.

“Sung-tae. The problem with attacking me is that I will pay you

back. Not only that, I was insulted as well.”

“What should...”

“Make me feel better. If I feel better, I might not use your cell phone to call your family.” The other three looked at me nervously as they carefully listened to my words. “Are there any facts I should know? Things that I might not know about the dungeon? Points will be given to the person who tells me first.”

It didn’t take long for the first answer to come out. The person called Jang Hyo-jin spoke first.

“Well, you don’t need to be in the place where the stairs were originally.”

“Huh?”

“So even if you are in the bathroom or someplace else... As long as the space is isolated, a staircase will appear at midnight.”

“Oh?”

The experiences from individuals were quite specific. I looked at Kim Sung-tae. “Your employer was experimenting with this?”

“...” An expression of embarrassment was his answer. They had probably done such experiments.

“With this, I don’t have any bad feelings towards Jang Hyo-jin. Does Sung-tae’s silence represent the rest of you?”

Kim Sung-tae hesitated before speaking. If two people were in the same place, then one staircase would be created. However, stepping on the same staircase wouldn’t cause the stairs to overlap. If someone went into the dungeon with an injury, that injury would be healed when they left the dungeon.

Once I listened to the experiment, I asked a few additional questions before saying. “They are pretty safe experiments. Have you never tried an experiment like this?”

“What...?

“Killing a person outside the dungeon and seeing if you can absorb their abilities.”

“C-Crazy!” Kim Sung-tae forgot his position and spat out. “Hey... There are still some lines we shouldn’t cross. I don’t know what thoughts you are having but... I told you. This is real life. It’s nonsense to think like that.”

“That is true.” I put a falsely evil expression on my face.

I released the expression. “This is somehow quite awkward to say.”

“...?” As they looked at my expression, saliva thickened in their mouths. I noticed it. I was mocking them until now. In fact, it was a little fun deceiving them. I knew more than anyone else the limit as a psycho. If they were murdered then the risks to me were enormous.

“If it is like this...” I placed my hand on Kim Sung-tae’s head as I pondered aloud. I placed strength into my wrist and shoved his head down on the ground. After lifting Kim Sung-tae’s head again, his face had become bloody.

“Ugh...”

“No matter how angry, don’t forget your position now.” He was the one who told me that when you entered the dungeon, your wounds will disappear. After two hours, the evidence will disappear. It didn’t matter what I did as long as they didn’t die.

“Give me all the items you have.”

“...”

“I can see from your reaction that this isn’t sufficient. You should worry about each other.”

Noises were heard from one side. The three people, except for Kim Sung-tae, were already scared. I collected all the items, such as clubs and bottles, and stored them in my inventory.

“Coins?”

“We don’t manage the money or supplies...”

“I see.” I nodded. I checked the time and went to work. I started beating the four people up.

“I-I gave you the items! There is no more, really!”

“I know.” I showed them the time on my cell phone. “There are approximately two hours left. Anyway, if you stay here then the staircase will appear.”

Once you entered and exited the dungeon, your wounds were restored. This meant that when they entered the dungeon, their wounds would be maintained. I didn’t know if the goblin’s medicine could restore broken bones. However, they would have to consume quite a lot of medicine on the seventh floor and would have to worry about all types of disadvantages.

They might have to eat their medicine to an extreme level. If they were with colleagues from the fifth floor, they might become meals for several people.

“I’d appreciate it if you convey my thanks. Tell them that this is just fair play for what they tried to do.”

Three of them gave up. Kim Sung-tae maintained his spirit until the end. After it was over, he said to me. “Again... Do you want to

consider it again?”

“What?”

“The ship you are on is rotten. I saw it. Earlier at the cafe, I heard it from Sang-min and Sang-ah.” These people were acquaintances of the Yoon siblings? They felt like the entourage of a chaebol child that often appeared in dramas.

“... Everyone misjudged. You are a great person. Now I know it for sure. I mean, the words that were said... I’ll make Sang-min recognize his mistake and reevaluate you.” Despite his blurry eyes and bloody lips, Sung-tae seemed quite strong-willed.

“Based on the system of the dungeon, a small number will survive. I am sure I will meet you again. Honestly, to say that I don’t have any bad feelings right now... It would be a lie. But that’s just the way I feel. If you join then Sang-min will surely get closer to being the final one... Of course, he will also give you sufficient compensation.” A so-called loyalist.

“I’ll say it once again... Yoon Ji-hee is rotten. Maybe she will do something unexpected... After her father died, she grew up with a mother who is a third rate actress. Did you know that?”

“Hrmm.”

“Rather... You might get caught around the ankle, compared to your profits... It is like picking up an empty bowl compared to a

bowl of rice. If you want to get far in the UZ Group..."

"Nothing like that."

"What?"

"I have no intention of joining UZ Group. In the first place, it doesn't seem like a company that can support me after I graduate." I got up.

Kim Sung-tae stared at me with disbelieving eyes. But it was true. After hearing the story of succession from Yoon Ji-hee, if Yoon Sang-ah and Yoon Sang-min hadn't entered at that moment, I would have killed Yoon Ji-hee on the seventh floor and neatly separated from the problem.

It was too reckless to get involved in such a fierce competition due to Yoon Ji-hee. However, Yoon Sang-min and Yoon Sang-ah had given me a hint. At the cafe, she had unintentionally provided me with extra information.

Just one thing. I had made one mistake when judging Yoon Ji-hee. This was it.

I was sure after hearing the information. That's why I refused the suggestion to kill Yoon Ji-hee and even called the chairman. I was sure. Secure Yoon Ji-hee, not the UZ Group.

"Well, I guess your words are correct."

“... Then why...”

“But you and those cousins, have you ever wondered what greed is after you entered the dungeon?”

“...?” I think I found the answer. After knowing this, it made a lot of sense. It wouldn’t matter if anyone else knew. Rather, those who knew the answer would snort with laughter. Maybe I had already known. When I looked at it, I could see the practical meaning.

I left the construction site. Quite a lot of sound should’ve leaked into the outside world, but in the end, the police didn’t come. As I headed home, I messaged my school friends. It was to obtain some information about Yoon Ji-hee’s academic life.

The last person I sent a message to was Yang Su-jin.

–What about the errands?

–I’ve prepared everything. Should I bring it in my bag?

–Yes. Good work.

–I’ll see you inside!! ☺ ☺

I took a shower and packed the things into my bag. Then I waited

for the stairs.

[7th floor arrived.]

Chapter 28 – Day 7, 7th Floor City

On the sixth floor, the first stimulus to his senses was ‘wind.’ The cool breeze that blew from below. The seventh floor was ‘light.’

“Are we outside?” Yang Su-jin asked, and I thought she was correct. The dungeon was bright like it was daytime. If there wasn’t the high ceiling of a cave instead of the sky, I would have thought I was outside.

A ball that served as the sun, was lodged in the centre of the ceiling. It really was like the light from the sun, to the extent that I could feel the warmth on my skin.

A new element of this place were some ruins. On the sixth floor, there had been no traces of any ruins. No, this place didn’t have traces, but the ruins itself.

“It looks like a city. Wah, kind of like Ancient Rome.”

I agreed, but the city ‘here’ was probably a few centuries older than Rome.

Although it was a ruin, there were buildings four or five floors tall. The stone roads had little damage compared to the buildings. There were thin pillars rising at regular intervals along the streets... Street lights?

“But why hasn’t that woman come down?” Yang Su-jin turned

and looked at the pillar where we had descended. It was a carved pillar of stone that stretched from the ceiling to the floor of the city. The staircase that brought us down didn't directly appear. Maybe the ceiling was the sixth floor.

Yoon Ji-hee appeared not long after. I didn't have to ask why she was late. I could see it. It was written on her face that she really didn't want to come down. "Ah... I-I'm sorry."

"If you are sorry..." Just as Yang Su-jin was about to say something...

[The locusts have started their activity.]

"Eh?"

All three of us looked around. But I couldn't see anything in either direction. In addition, I didn't hear anything.

"E-Excuse me..." It was Yoon Ji-hee who raised her finger upwards. There were black dots in the air. As time passed, the number of dots increased and their size also became bigger.

[Evil Swarm of Locusts. Type: Reptile. Rank D.]

[They are called locusts due to their appearance, grouping

habits and unique wings. Biologically, they are reptiles. When hunting animals, they separate their prey according to size and will take them back to their habitats instead of eating the prey right away.]

[They have an organ in their body to store sunlight. The disadvantage of flapping their wings is that it consumes a huge number of calories, making them reluctant to act in a space that doesn't receive light.]

I couldn't eat these guys properly. I grumbled and clapped my hands. The eyes of the two females zeroed in on me. "Go." I pointed to the ruins. Both of them seemed to understand immediately, as they moved quickly.

We entered a one-story building, but the interior was quite large. Most importantly, there was a space where the light didn't reach. There were many wooden shelves like it was a store that sold something. We crouched under the table that acted as a counter and waited.

Soon, all the light that entered the building was completely obscured by the swarm of locusts. There was the sound of wings flapping and countless black shapes passing by the door, but there were no signs of it ending.

Tak.

There was something on the ground next to my feet. I looked at

the locust that had taken one step into the building. Indeed, they really had the appearance of a locust. It was just like a locust, except that there were no insect-specific joints and it had the twinkling eyes of a reptile.

Between the gaping mouth, the teeth looked like toothpicks. “Look at this b*stard.” I laughed as I stared into its yellow eyes. I didn’t think it would understand, but... The mouth snapped crazily like it was expressing its feelings.

In the end though, it didn’t come in.

It had only taken one step into the building before turning around and flying back down the road. It was pretty cool in here. Due to the building being made of stone, the temperature was just like a refrigerator.

“I-It didn’t come in?” Yang Su-jin asked in a furtive voice. I nodded and looked at Yoon Ji-hee. She had her eyes closed and was blocking her ears. I waited for a while, but the sound of the wings outside didn’t stop. It felt like a dozen or so big dogs were flying around.

“We are trapped right?”

“It seems so.” Even though they were ranked ‘D’, the numbers were overwhelming. They weren’t opponents that we could run away from, so we couldn’t go out.

There was only one way left. “Wait until night.”

“...”

“...?”

It seemed pretty ridiculous. Not only Yoon Ji-hee, but Yang Su-jin also stiffened. They stared blankly at me. However, it wasn’t that strange if you thought about it. First of all, there was always a solution. The reptiles didn’t always fly through the sky since there was a time when they couldn’t act. “Besides, this is a place where people lived.”

It was said that this dungeon was created by putting together places that actually existed in another world. This place couldn’t shine 24 hours a day, since it was a place where humans lived. Furthermore, the shape of the pillars on the street looked like street lamps. In other words, the artificial sun would eventually turn off.

“Indeed!” As Yang Su-jin clapped positively, I held out a hand to her to ask for the items. Yang Su-jin took out a hot pack from her bag. This was my first request for her. Due to the lizardman’s essence penalty, I had to suffer quite a bit of cold on the sixth floor.

This was the correct answer. This place was huge. Thanks to the buildings, it was difficult to guess the width of this space, but I had spotted some pillars quite a distance away. They also led up to the sixth floor.

“A village? No... Maybe it was actually a wide city in reality. This might take longer than I thought.” Still, it wasn’t bad to think positively. If I had to wait then there was something I had to wait for.

I pulled a book from my inventory.

[An Introduction to the Old Language of Tellan.]

Even if it was an introductory book, it was a book that I couldn’t understand properly.

However, I decided to try it. Even though I came down to the seventh floor, there didn’t seem to be any special clues about this language. Based on the cultural relics and cities, it wouldn’t be bad to know the language in the future.

I opened the book but couldn’t understand the letters. The composition of the letters was shorter than the other books I had.

First... I looked at the letters that occurred most often. Once I figured that out...

[Talent has been acquired.]

[Talent – Text Decryption: The ability to decrypt letters and

passwords of unknown language systems. Thinking power and insight has slightly increased.]

[Talent has been acquired.]

[Talent – Tellan (Reading, Writing): The ability to read and write Tellan will rise according to the level. There is a slight increase in Planning.]

[Tellan (Conversation) will be corrected according to the level.]

Then fragments of information entered my head. I had figured out the word ‘Ebun’ as well as the way of pronouncing the syllable ‘e’. If this was the case, it might not take too long to understand and read the language!

“Haha...” I smiled as the clue was solved more easily than I thought. Then I realized that I had forgotten one thing. I pulled out a book from my bag.

[4,000 Essential Swahili Vocabulary]

“You said that you know English and French?”

“Yes...” It seemed possible to have a fairly natural conversation, since she had been learning it since childhood. Yang Su-jin looked at Yoon Ji-hee with disbelieving eyes.

“Then memorize this. I will give you two hours to memorize as much as you can. Please remember at least 40 characters. Otherwise, you won’t be able to eat the packed food.”

“Huh?”

“The time will start from now.” I turned on the timer on my cell phone.

Yang Su-jin, who was staring blankly, suddenly interrupted. “I want to try!”

“There is only one book.”

“Can I tear out the page from another chapter and memorize it?” I didn’t think much of it as I nodded and engrossed myself in the book again. I figured out how to read eight words. I had just realized that the language used punctuation in a different way when the timer rang.

[Reading Comprehension. Lv 3. 244/400]

[Text Decryption Lv 1. 81/100]

[Tellan (Reading, Writing) Lv 1. 56/100]

Yang Su-jin had a confident expression on her face. “I memorized 80 of them!”

“Is that so?” I answered casually and didn’t talk any more for a few minutes. Yang Su-jin’s expression turned impatient.

“Aren’t you going to ask?” Although the talent had gone up, word memorization was an area where people would forget as soon as they stopped reading. I had seen it in a few students who I had tutored. I needed to distinguish between true memorization and cramming.

“-Shona.”

“W-when? Ah... No, wait.”

Yang Su-jin remembered 34 characters. If I subtracted those that she said, “Ah! That is wrong!” then it would only be 29.

“Then it’s your turn.”

“I... I read...Up to this page.” There were 15 words on a page. She read eight pages for a total of 120 words. Yoon Ji-hee had

memorized 104 of them.

“It’s okay.”

“...” Yang Su-jin’s face wrinkled as Yoon Ji-hee received some positive words. Considering that she had learned English, I stayed away from languages with common etymologies such as French or Russian. Her basic memorization ability wasn’t bad, rather it was quite high.

Although I had already expected it... “Compared to what you look like, your head is surprisingly good when you study.”

“I-I, not, studying...” It wasn’t just a condescending act. She was flustered due to the praise. In actuality, her grades weren’t bad. Based on the messages from my friends about her academic record, she never got anything below an A.

“You must have done quite well in high school.”

“I-I didn’t. I was almost yanked out of classes... That... I went to an international school.” It was a place where parents who were crazy about education in East Asia sent their children. They couldn’t just have wealthy parents, but the students had to study well. It would be difficult for students of general high schools like me to follow their classes.

“Even if you entered through a special screening, it is great that you managed to keep up with the classes. I heard quite a bit about

it while studying in a public school.”

“...”

“Well. It isn’t good or bad, just a little surprising.” While we were speaking, the outside was becoming dim. The sound of the locusts’ flapping wings also cut off. I should take a look around this place.

“Yoon Ji-hee, wait here.”

“B-by myself?”

“If a locust pops up, then you will have to run back. Do you still want to follow?” I threw the hot pack to Yoon Ji-hee. My hand pointed to the chapter she was holding. “You keep reading. I don’t think it will take that much longer to memorize. Well, you shouldn’t waste your time while waiting.”

Things were going well. Honestly, it was more than I expected.

I exited with Yang Su-jin. The sun on the ceiling was covered. Just like eyelids covering the eyes, a giant cover surrounded the artificial sun. Before it became completely dark, I stored as much of the scenery into my mind map as possible.

“Let’s focus on the ears rather than the eyes. Go over there...”

“...” At that moment, I noticed that Yang Su-jin’s cheeks were puffed out.

“What is it?”

“Nothing.”

“If you have a complaint then say it.”

“I’m sorry. Yes, I am stupid.”

“What?”

“Yes. I am unemployed. I don’t even know where an international school is. In addition, I only managed to memorize 34 words in two hours.”

What was this...? It was actually 29 instead of 34 words, but it wasn’t that good. “I don’t think you are stupid.”

“... It was only 34. In two hours.” It was actually 29. “If she is so clever with just memorization skills, my position with Yoon Ji-hee should be reversed. Isn’t that right?”

“...” As I paid attention to my surroundings, I muttered. “Being good at studying and having a good head is different.”

“What is different?”

“Among the high school friends that I have, there is one who dropped out of school and delivered jajangmyeon. He created a good, quick service delivery app and received several investments. He’s a great friend. I personally think he is very smart.”

It was the difference between having a talent and using the talent in the right place. However, most people didn’t realize their talents and weren’t satisfied. “So what if you can’t memorize an African language in a few hours? She can’t even survive one hour here alone. Isn’t that right?”

“That’s right.”

“Then what is the problem? You can do it.” That was enough. Anyway, they would have to face quite a lot of people who came down to this place. For most of them, their actions would be no different.

“Anyway, you still haven’t tried to stab me in the back. That alone is good enough.”

“... What if I do so in the future?”

“It isn’t a high possibility. Now stop whining and listen carefully.” In the meantime, the surroundings were quiet. The streets became completely dark and the street lights turned on. However, the street lights only brightened the middle of the road.

The outskirts and side buildings were completely dark.

Yang Su-jin and I stuck closely to the outer walls of the buildings. As we moved out of the light, we could only see within our original field of view. “Well, there is something I don’t know.” Yang Su-jin spoke in a low voice.

“What is it?”

“Did you keep that woman alive for her language abilities? If you don’t teach her how to fight and just let her read a book, then we can kill her whenever we want.”

She sounded like she had found the answer. I didn’t answer. Regardless of my answer, it was important that she find an answer she could understand. She wasn’t academically smart but her head wasn’t bad.

... Even so, 29 words were disappointing.

[Stealth. Lv 3. 244/400]

“...”

“...!” I held my breath as the letters surfaced. Yang Su-jin did the same as if she saw the letters. The experience of Stealth had gone up. In other words, there was something else in the area. Before

long, there was a sound in the darkness.

Chapter 29 – Day 7, 7th Floor Language

The first thing that appeared in the darkness was the face of a man.

“Pant! Pant!”

After that, I saw the companions running beside him. There was the same emotion on everyone’s faces: Fear.

“Kyak!” The foot of a woman running in the back caught on a broken stone in the road and twisted. The woman fell to the ground in a tricky position. It was impossible to get up and run away, “Help me!”

The five companions all looked back. But no one reached out to help the woman. “Ho-jin! Please!” Only one man stopped while the others ran down the road. The price of his hesitation came straight away.

Quark!

A spear flew through the darkness and pierced the man’s belly before sticking into the ground. “... Keok.” Blood flowed from the man’s mouth. Disbelieving eyes glanced down and both hands grabbed the spear in his belly. However, he didn’t pull out the spear.

The woman screamed. She got up and moved with a limping left

leg... Only, the pursuer was right behind her.

[Small Sun Knight – Spearman. Type: Golem Rank B]

[A top of the line golem soldier that forms the Talia Army. They are charged by the ‘small sun’ of Talia and when it is not on display, they act as night guards to protect the citizens of the city from the invasion of barbarians. If you aren’t an enemy then you have nothing to fear, even if you’re not regular citizens of Talia. It is their job to defend civilized people within the city, regardless of nationality.]

Indeed, like the name, the golem looked like a guardian of the city. It was four meters tall and there was armor wrapped around its body. The golem reached out one hand and grabbed the woman’s body. Without any resistance, the woman was raised up to the golem’s eye level. Then it quickly struck.

Bam.

It passed through the bloody pudding remains of the woman and approached the still struggling man. It grabbed the spear and pulled it out, causing the wriggling of the body to stop.

“...What? That...” Yang Su-jin squeaked in a voice that was 20 times smaller than before. From the time that the spear flew, we entered a building on the outskirts. We looked at the situation through the window.

“Oppa, can you win against that?” Just as I was about to answer, the party that ran away earlier came back to this side. They screamed as they saw the two bodies and the golem. Another golem walked out from the direction they appeared from. This time, it wasn’t a spearman but a swordsman.

“I can’t say for sure.” I said while looking at the slaughter. “But now I can’t win.” I thought I could catch one of them with Elmer’s Dummy Destroyer but it was different when there was two. One man threw something and caused a pretty intense explosion at the face of a golem. It was like a grenade.

Unfortunately for him, the statue wasn’t affected. Although the struggling group had fairly good movements, the golems were much stronger and faster. I waited quietly with Yang Su-jin. Soon, all of them became corpses and the golems disappeared with their bodies.

At that time, I heard a crying noise not far from us.

Hak!

I immediately activated Limiter Release. There was a moaning sound but I blocked the person’s mouth. It was a man. Rather than running away like the earlier party members, he slipped over here and survived.

“What is that stone statue?” He made a face like he didn’t understand. I kept his mouth shut as I twisted his fingers. There

was an expression of pain on his face, but he regained his spirit. I asked again. “Answer in a low voice. What is that stone statue?”

“I-I don’t know... They appeared all of a sudden...” The main stuttered in a quiet tone. “I-I found a building. It contained items like a museum... All of a sudden, they appeared on the street.”

“So?”

“It tried to speak to us.”

“Speak?”

“They speak, but it sounds like a foreign language... It repeated the same words several times before suddenly attacking.”

“Is your party all dead?”

“I-I don’t know... Perhaps.” I lifted the man’s body. I had listened to his story and now it was time to eat him. It was time to go. I turned and looked at Yang Su-jin, but her face was stiff. I followed her gaze to see a golem watching us from the middle of the road.

“Hiik!” The man screamed. I was also surprised. I had been listening closely but couldn’t hear any footsteps. It had the ability to kill all sounds. I tried to act immediately.

“Tecka nop ka seb qu?” A gentle voice that sounded like it would

come from an Arab man emerged, and the voice didn't seem to go with its size. "Tecka nop ka seb qu?" After saying that, it slowly stepped towards us. "Tecka nop ka seb qu?"

The third time, I realized something.

[Talent has been acquired.]

I didn't answer. I just, "Ack!" I gave a hard push to the man's back. There was the sound of something breaking and the man fell to the ground. But he wasn't dead.

"Hey. Run."

"Yes!" I ran away with Yang Su-jin. I could hear the scream of the man I'd used as bait behind me.

Tecka nop ka seb qu. I didn't know the meaning. But using the two syllables at the end, I was able to understand one syllable. It was a marker to indicate a question. I perceived it.

[Talent – Tellan (Conversation): The ability to understand and speak Tellan will rise in proportion to the level. Planning and eloquence will slightly increase.]

I acquired this talent. The screams of the male bait echoed behind them. I scanned the map that I had drawn in my head. I remembered the path by using the arrangement of the street lights and the broken roads as signs. As soon as I entered the building that we were originally in, I heard a small scream. It was from the surprised Yoon Ji-hee.

“So there isn’t just one or two guards? The explanation says there is an army...” Yang Su-jin asked nervously. I nodded. I wasn’t focused on that part. The man had said a ‘museum.’

Yes. If I thought about it, this was a ‘city.’ It was reasonable to have a museum or library in a city. Groceries or wood would obviously be rotten and gone, but things that were commonly called ‘treasures’ wouldn’t age so easily.

“Locusts during the day. Guards at night. However, it is possible to hide to a certain extent at night... Every time we meet something dangerous, a bait can be used.” Yang Su-jin looked at Yoon Ji-hee as I said the word ‘bait.’ Yoon Ji-hee trembled at her gaze.

“Let’s take a little rest. Eat this.” I pulled out some kimbap and a water bottle and handed it to Yang Su-jin. Yoon Ji-hee stared at me. I also threw a kimbap to Yoon Ji-hee. “Here. I still remember my promise from earlier.”

“T-thank you.” She seemed like a little girl as she accepted it. I instructed Yang Su-jin to investigate the back of the building and the surrounding alleys to see if there was any way to escape. Meanwhile, I monitored the front windows. Yoon Ji-hee was

reading the Swahili words when I beckoned to her.

She came right away. “What did you do while you were waiting?”

“Words... I’ve been memorizing them.” Thought it was obvious that she was memorizing the words, Yoon Ji-hee added something unexpected. “More than 10 pages... I remembered.”

She avoided my gaze as I stared at her. It seemed she was embarrassed to say that she memorized words like a child. “Really? Great. It wouldn’t have been easy to concentrate.” I completed praised her and pulled out the introduction to Tellan.

“This... The words written on the wall...” She knew what it was?

“Ah, just... I was looking at the letters written on the walls as I came down... Then I got a skill. A-Although it is only level two...”

“That’s amazing. I killed a lot of people but none of them had such talent. I didn’t know about it until now. You must have some talent on this side. You should have gone to a language course instead of management.”

“... In fact, even in high school... I liked foreign languages...” Yoon Ji-hee’s expressions and words were brighter than before.

She was this type. I had seen a lot of them. In order to fill out my scholarship, I worked in the city hall every summer vacation. I often tutored low-income high school students.

Although the material wealth wasn't comparable, I saw Yoon Ji-hee's exact response from some of the children there. She wasn't lacking in intelligence. There were many whose average, or rather, their academic achievements were very high. However, their self-esteem and confidence were low.

It wasn't simply because of material poverty. It was often the case for those who grew up receiving physical or verbal violence from their parents, or if they grew up in a fairly high-pressure educational environment.

“Now, read this book instead of the Swahili.”

“Thi...s?”

“You've learnt two foreign languages and I think your language ability is several times better than mine.”

Even if it was to receive the scholarship, I taught the children with everything I had. I also advised the high school students. It was acknowledgment that they most desired. Someone who listened and showed interest in their specialties.

I also grew up in a house that I wasn't comfortable with, so I reflected on some of my experiences and gave confidence to the students. Not only did it help them, I felt more confidence and it encouraged me to take control of my own life.

As a result, almost all the children I taught improved considerably in personality and confidence. They went to a good university and still occasionally called me to have a meal together. If there was something difficult, then they would consult me first.

“This is something we will need to get through here in the future. I want Yoon Ji-hee to take over this role.”

“...”

“You’re good, So I’ll leave it to you.” When I helped the students, I also got some psychological comfort. We have a healthy relationship with each other. But this wasn’t a voluntary activity.

“I-I understand.”

“Then work hard.”

When I first saw Yoon Ji-hee, I misunderstood that she was the spoiled daughter of a chaebol. I thought she would be so adored in her family that she would treat people as stupid. I didn’t realize that she was the same type as the low-income students I knew.

But then Yoon Sang-ah and Yoon Sang-min had appeared. I realized I was mistaken after hearing them talk. This girl was needy. She wasn’t treated ‘properly’ in the environment she grew up in. Her father, the son of the chairman, died and left his wife and daughter to suffer from uncertainties.

That's why she thought she was a failure despite entering an international school. Therefore, she would crave and desire someone's recognition. Finally, the door to this dungeon opened in front of her.

"Yes, I'll work hard." Originally, I didn't think she would have any use. If I succeeded, then I would get a resource that was hard to obtain, but she was useless in the dungeon. In any case, if she didn't betray me then I wouldn't betray her.

I desired success as much as she wanted recognition. This was good as I could give that to her. However, this wasn't a volunteer activity, but a method of control. So far, she was mentally independent from me.

Well, I didn't need it in the first place. "Fighting." I smiled at Yoon Ji-hee for the first time. Yoon Ji-hee hesitated but then she smiled back. There was no pretense in the smile. I turned and looked out the window.

I had already figured out how to clear the 7th floor.

Chapter 30 – Day 7, 7th Floor Key

If someone was watching us, then the view would be quite frustrating. The three of us hadn't moved for hours. Yoon Ji-hee was reading the introduction to Tellan while I was flipping through another book I had about Tellan. As expected, the words were different but I could match some characters. I learned how to read the letters one by one.

"I'm bored." Yang Su-jin complained. She had put together the tools she collected from the fourth floor and the potions she gained so far, and was immersed in experimentation. The academic atmosphere was good. In fact, although there was nothing material to be gained from the seventh floor, time itself was a valuable resource.

Even if it was dangerous outside, it wasn't the least bit dangerous inside this building. In other words, we could stay in here until the limit. Of course, that limit was coming a little bit closer. As the sun finally rose, I looked at the two women.

It was the end of the day when we came down here. The night was quite long. Our tired eyes looked up at the light. Our food also showed signs of running out.

We felt hungry during the night and had one more meal. As a result, there were two energy bars and one triangle kimbap left. In addition, there were two 500mL bottles of water. I pulled out a piece of paper from my inventory.

[Return Ticket: 5th floor.]

[For explorers, this scroll containing the power of ■■■ is best for spatial movement. The function will be activated when torn by hand. The explorer is forcefully moved to a facility on the 5th floor and will stay there for 12 hours.]

I didn't have just one. On the 6th floor, I had captured four tickets from Kim Ha-jong and Kwak Yu-han along with the coins that they dropped. "Uh, you are using that now?"

"Yes." I nodded and ordered. "Keep an eye on your backs. If you're hungry, then eat the remaining food."

I tore the ticket.

[You are moving to the 5th floor.]

The space in front of my eyes changed quickly, and then I was standing on the fifth floor. This... The movement was instant, so it was possible to use the ticket for avoidance. In a crisis situation, I would disappear immediately if I tore the ticket. However, in an environment like the sixth floor where the stairs were collapsing, it was just an act of suicide.

"Hey! Where did you come from?" People were shouting towards me.

The people on the fifth floor were divided into groups of five or six. Looking at the numbers, there was a minimum of 10 groups. It was difficult to see them as those heading down to the sixth floor.

“Zenda is this way!”

“Talia? Are you from Talia?”

“Rikare!”

Aha. They were city names. Even though my city was wide, it wasn't big enough to hold all the people in the dungeon. I slowly walked towards the group that said ‘Talia.’

“No, you should quickly answer when I call! It is really frustrating.” I waved my hand to the middle-aged man who seemed impatient and look at the faces of those he gathered. There were some familiar faces. Two of them.

“We meet again.” Both of their expressions were different, but Yoon Sang-min and Yoon Sang-ah were looking this way with gleaming eyes. “If both of you came at once, it seems like you still have tickets left.”

“That is none of your business.” Yoon Sang-ah was smiling, but it didn't reach her eyes.

“I’m well aware of what you did to Sung-tae oppa.”

“I’m glad.”

As we exchanged greetings, the frustrated middle-aged man made a confused expression. “That... You know each other?”

Before Yoon Sang-ah could answer, I laughed and lowered my hand. “Nope. I have nothing to do with those people over there at all. I just act according to how I am treated. Ajusshi”

“...”

“Crazy bastard.” I heard Yoon Sang-ah mutter.

The quiet Yoon Sang-min opened his mouth. “It isn’t just those gathered here, but the ones below us. We are on the same seventh floor, yet we ended up meeting for the first time on this fifth floor.”

Was that so? Yes, the atmosphere made it seem like a tacit relationship had already been formed. Except for the impatient ones, the rest were still watching the situation. Were they leading with money? Or...

“My sister and I have found the answer.”

“The answer?”

“It’s the way to clear the seventh floor. There’s a building in the center of the city. There’s a door inside on the floor.”

“Oppa! If you say that...” Yoon Sang-min restrained his sister from intervening.

“I checked using the light of my cell phone. There’s a device in the building that’s charged by ‘light’. The roof of the building can be opened manually. Use the sunlight gathered during the daytime to open the door.”

“I’ll be eaten by locusts after I open the door.”

“It seems so. But it isn’t just the energy of the sun that can activate it.” Yoon Sang-min pulled something out from his inventory. It seemed to be a translucent battery that was 20 times bigger than normal ones. The insides were shining with a yellow fluorescent colour.

“This, I got it from the city guards.”

“... Did you kill it?”

“Yes. Fortunately, I have one person with a ‘technique’ that matches the guards. Originally, there were two batteries but I already put one in the generator. It said 1/10. After night has come a few times, I can open the door.”

A door that opened with light. Similarly, the light energy that moved the guards could also open the door. It was a plausible idea. Perhaps it would actually work.

“Of course, the reason I say this is that I don’t think it is impossible for you.”

“That is tremendous confidence.”

“There is a basis for the confidence.” Yoon Sang-min pointed to the gathered people.

“Sung-tae told me of your talents. It wasn’t a nice surprise, but he said he won’t be beaten by the same method twice.”

“Thank you.”

“But I want to let you know. Those guards aren’t things that can be caught with the power of a human. If you don’t have anyone with the key technique, then it will be pretty damaging.”

It reminded me of the speech contest I watched in elementary school. The power in Yoon Sang-min’s voice became even stronger. His hands gestured like he was immersed in what he was saying.

“In that state, ‘we’ will be waiting at the door for you to come. Everyone here has decided to become companions. We will wait in front of the door for as long as possible. As you know, the seventh

floor is quite a useful development time.”

In the end, if I didn’t want to die, then I should quietly join his side? Yoon Sang-min finished with a laugh. Yoon Sang-ah, who was listening next to me, applauded.

“And?”

“And?” Yoon Sang-min repeated my words stupidly. I knew it. I stealthily stepped back.

“If that is the end of it...”

“... Don’t you understand?” Yoon Sang-ah raised her voice like she was frustrated. “Checkmate. Checkmate!”

“Maybe it is... Why don’t you ask your brother? See if he gained any experience in Persuasion.”

“What?”

“He tried to deliver an intense speech, but I wasn’t convinced at all.” Not just Yoon Sang-ah, but Yoon Sang-min’s face also twitched.

Aigoo... They accidentally showed the curses they were feeling in their hearts. Even if this was the dungeon, if they got into the habit of cursing then it would be hard to break in reality. They tried to

say something nice. It was nonsense.

“Frankly speaking, I was trying to...”

I pointed at Yoon Sang-min. “Hey, don’t open your mouth. It would be more helpful if you keep it shut.” When looking at martial arts novels, the characters were able to see what was in the depths of a person’s heart. Honestly, this wasn’t wrong even in reality.

However, none of these guys were worth having a witty conversations with. “Frankly, I thought your younger sister was terrible, but she seems decent just by waiting quietly in the back. Actually, I’ve been having some fun so I guess I’ll eat it all.” I brought a hand to my mouth and made a rude gesture.

“Let’s try to cut down on that perfect image. It makes my mouth itch.”

[The level of a talent has risen.]

[Taunt. Lv 4. 14/800]

[Eloquence has exceeded the limit.]

[Eloquence: 11]

I hadn't intended to do this. Yoon Sang-min's expression was completely distorted. Indeed, there were a few people with pretend faces in reality. But if they were scratched even a little bit, their true expressions would be revealed. Their true substance was usually sloppy.

"In fact, didn't you send four people after me in the middle of the night?"

"This b*stard is totally crazy!"

Rather, Yoon Sang-ah's mental state seemed better. "Hey! What is so good about you!? You're just someone who buzzes around and shakes your tail when sucking up to someone..."

I literally turned around. As the stone statue said on the fifth floor, this place was decorated with many facilities. There were tables for meals and beds for sleeping. Of course, I didn't intend to sleep leisurely. I headed to a corner of the wall. There was a human sized stone statue with a sign.

[■■■'s Stone Statue]

Was it the one from the fifth floor? I wanted to check.

[Welcome. Explorer.]

I was able to tell after hearing it talk. It was the same ‘type,’ but a different personality. “I want to see the goods that you’re selling.” It was literally a resting place, so there wasn’t a lot in the store.

A meal for one person cost five silver. One 500mL bottle of water was one silver. Clothes or a blanket were sold for 10~30 silver. “... Is this the same price or money as the original world?”

[You are very sharp.]

This stone statue was more brusque than the previous one. However, their expressions when amused were the same.

[Certainly, the value of silver coins were different in those human societies. That market price has little meaning here.]

“It is a nominal currency.” I looked through the list that the stone statue showed me. There were only two items that weren’t so-called necessities.

[Tellian Introduction: New Edition – 15 gold coins (= 300 silver)]

[Ticket: Return to 5th Floor – 10 gold coins (= 200 silver)]

[Improved Leather Travel Bags – 5 gold coins]

I was able to buy the introduction to Tellan for a few silver coins from the hidden store on the fourth floor. Of course, there was a difference between the ‘old’ and ‘new’ editions, but there were few changes in the language of the book itself. “Has anyone purchased this book yet?”

[I can’t tell you...]

I see.

[...Just.]

The stone statue showed some signs of playfulness.

[There is nobody who had purchased it so far.]

“... Can you tell me that?”

[Won't it be okay? Anyway, autonomy is allowed to some extent. Besides, there was no other human in this room who asked me this.]

Even so, usually this wouldn't be done for no reason...

[Nope. It is my personal interest.]

It asserted. Then it spoke in a coy voice.

[Incidentally, I have already sold 10 of the return tickets. Six of them were purchased by explorers in the same city as you. Yes. Like Kim Hee-chul, there are those who worried about buying the book. Maybe they had no money left.]

“...” I pointed to two of the improved leather bags. “These two. I will spend the rest of the money on food and water.”

[Your purchase has been completed.]

I turned to leave. I might be able to get more information but... It was worrisome. My back always felt cold from the gazes of those

other brats on the fifth floor.

[I know why Iphos felt regret. Since the sixth floor, you have come into the area that I'm responsible for.]

“I'll see you later.”

[I am looking forward to it. Ah, you can leave early by taking advantage of that scaffold over there.]

The stone statue said from behind me.

[Hopefully you will have a good stay in the city.]

Yoon Sang-min and the others were heading towards the scaffold.

“...” Based on their expressions, it seemed like they were preparing to say something.

“Listen carefully.” I would show them what real persuasion was. I placed both hands in my pocket, then completely removed the smile from my face and spoke sincerely. “If you want to live, then

give me all of your items and stay in your current position. That would be safer than becoming my meal.”

“...”

“...”

“...”

[Induce Fear Lv 1. 88/100]

Who was this guy? One person came up to me.

I said, “I’m telling you the truth. This b*stard. Don’t get in my way. Okay?”

“You will regret...”

“Thank you for the information.” Without looking back, I climbed onto the scaffold. My vision changed and the seventh floor appeared.

“Eh? You’re already here?” Yang Su-jin, who welcomed me, was a bloody mess. Eyes. Nose and mouth. Blood was pouring out from every hole in her body.

“What is this?”

“I tasted just one drop of the mixture. This is really a huge effect.” I sighed as Yang Su-jin gave me a thumbs up. I threw one leather bag at her.

“Next time, bring a change of clothes.” Then I checked on my ‘key.’ The condition was perfect.

Now was the time for the flower to bloom.

Chapter 31 – Day 7, 7th Floor A Different Class

Another night. Day. Then night again. Just before the end of the next day, I was able to be certain.

“Kao to...” I spoke.

[Text Decryption. Lv 4. 566/800]

[Tellan (Reading, Writing) Lv 3. 312/400]

I could already read Tellan at a reasonable level. I learned hundreds of words from the introduction and mastered some essential verbs and adjectives. But, I wasn’t the only one to memorize the language.

“Uo mek ru gike ger bu.” The words flowed seamlessly from Yoon Ji-hee’s mouth, just like the original spoken language. I couldn’t know for sure since I didn’t know the words, but it was clear that Yoon Ji-hee was speaking Tellan very naturally.

Yoon Ji-hee mastered the method of pronunciation that was written in the introduction, so she was several steps ahead of me. As her pronunciation became more natural, it became harder to hear what she was saying.

Maybe it would be the same if I met someone who spoke the actual Tellan language. It was just like how people who learned English from books couldn't talk to Americans.

"Excuse me. Are you even saying it properly? Will you tell say if it isn't correct?" Su-jin grumbled.

"Cor... It is correct." Yoon Ji-hee responded to the grumbling Yang Su-jin. It was worth it. Even if she was shown the books, Yang Su-jin couldn't understand the structure of the verbs properly. Actually, this wasn't a matter of making fun of Yang Su-jin.

I had checked Yoon Ji-hee's intelligence related stats. Obviously, some of her stats were lower than Yang Su-jin's, who had eaten Yoo Su-jeong. But the thing I paid attention to was the speed at which her talents were rising.

My Text Decryption was now at Level 4. Tellan reading and writing was at Level 3.

But Yoon Ji-hee's Text Decryption was at Level 2. Her Tellan reading and writing? Surprisingly, it was Level 5 and on the verge of becoming Level 6. I didn't understand why her Text Decryption was lower, but she had spent longer reading the introduction to the language.

This was also true of Yang Su-jin. Apart from mixing poisons and wielding her dagger, Yang Su-jin read the English book I brought, but her talent lagged behind my rise on the fifth floor. It seemed

like I had a talent for talent acquisition.

Even the process of getting the talent was funny, because it reflected the quality that I had. Fortunately, it wasn't that important. There was another way to get talents here, by 'eating' a person who had talent in this field. I wouldn't think too deeply about it right now.

"Go." I ordered when it became dark. I dragged the two people onto the streets. We didn't walk down the dim paths but in the centre of the street lights. I could hear Yang Su-jin nervously swallowing her saliva.

We only walked for a few minutes. "Kyaaak!" Yoon Ji-hee screamed. A golem stood before us. Although Yang Su-jin stiffened, she didn't take any action. I placed my hand on Yoon Ji-hee's shoulder to calm her down.

She looked at me with terrified eyes.

I laughed as, "Tecka nop ka seb qu?" The golem asked this question.

It was a good feeling. "Now we definitely have over 30 people, Oppa." Yoon Sang-ah spoke happily but Yoon Sang-min wasn't pleased. It was because the previous words were still ringing in his ears.

He was told to shut his mouth. He was hiding stupidity behind his image. Those were the words.

An arrow that suddenly flew at him. It was the feeling of someone penetrating his weak point that he hadn't even be aware of. He didn't know how that man, Hee-chul, knew about the matter. But... It was the truth. Unlike the image on the surface, Yoon Sang-min's grandfather only gave him a 'medium' evaluation.

He received a worse evaluation than his younger sibling Yoon Sang-ah, so it was natural for him to feel bad. The only ones lower were his five year old brother, who didn't enter the dungeon, and Yoon Ji-hee.

The other two above him... Yoon Sang-min couldn't beat them. It had been like that since childhood, so he had to admit it. They were 'real.' They weren't fakes reigning over mediocre people. One of his female cousins came to mind. She was the one who told his grandfather about the existence of the dungeon.

Yoon Sang-min had arrived earlier than the other grandchildren and was the only witness. He saw the evidence she used to convince their grandfather. It was two days before the end of the fifth floor.

She had a relaxed and interested expression. He realized it again after a few years. She was a special existence. Life was unfair. He couldn't reach the sky, while they had already transcended the sky. The other two people above him.

“...But... It will be different from now on.”

“Eh? What did you say? Oppa?”

“Never mind. Jin-tae?”

“He is controlling the guard. It uses a club, so a little bit of practice is needed to manipulate it.” Yoon Sang-min nodded. His key was Kim Jin-tae. He was a good friend of Kim Sung-tae and someone who followed Kim Sung-tae since childhood.

No, a friend who was a hound. After clearing the ‘special dungeon’ on the fourth floor, he got a technique called ‘Doll Possession.’ Although it put him into a comatose state, he could control a golem or doll of a certain rank. He used it to control a golem and then joined forces with the others to hunt the golems.

It wasn’t a method without sacrifices. There was one person who was seriously injured in the fight against the golems, and once a third golem was added to the fight, one person had to be left as bait while the others retreated.

However, this loss of personnel could be compensated from the fifth floor. The other groups couldn’t catch the locusts or golems and tore their tickets one by one, so it wasn’t hard to obtain them.

“Sang-min hyung.” Kim Sung-tae came up with 12 tickets. They were the tickets of the group members who joined this time.

This was the condition that Yoon Sang-min gave to those who wanted to join.

“There is no need to sacrifice items or your lives. If you want to come with me, then hand me all the tickets you have and follow me.” As a result, he had accumulated approximately 60 tickets. Those idiots seemed to be unaware, but these tickets would be precious from now on.

They had already stayed on the seventh floor for more than two days. Tickets were the only means of securing food, supplies and safety. It might not be as good as items or lives right now, but in the end, Yoon Sang-min would be able to reign if he had the tickets.

‘I will remain until the end and become the successor.’ As that man said, he was no different from someone pretending to be a genius. Based on his chaebol background, he was able to get followers like Kim Sung-tae and Kim Jin-tae.

There was only one sky. Yoon Sang-min was a strong leader. Someday, he would be able to beat that sky. The dungeon would make this possible, even if he wasn’t as perfect as his other two cousins. Now he had 60 tickets in his hands and things were just starting.

The knowledge of the power of the guards had already been gathered in abundance. Due to a considerable number of guards being hunted, there wouldn’t be many guards that would pass by

tonight.

“Someone is coming?”

“..” Yoon Sang-min stood up as he received the report he heard outside the building. After going to the fifth floor several times, he realized that almost all of the groups on the seventh floor had joined him or died.

There was only one group left. It was like he expected. Three people. Yoon Ji-hee, a man, and a female in her late teens. “I never told you my location. Yet you managed to come.”

However, in the process, there must have been a severe loss of manpower. There were only three of them left. Even if Kim Jin-tae didn’t borrow the golem’s power, he now had dozens of people to suppress them.

“I won’t ask you to give me your items or your lives. Do you have any tickets? I will allow you to join if you give all of them to me.”

“Hey, Oppa.” Yoon Sang-ah approached and knocked on Yoon Sang-min’s back.

“Can’t we just take it?” She was smiling but she seemed unhappy. Of course, Yoon Sang-min wouldn’t spare them even if he had the tickets. Even though Hee-chul was trouble, he was a person with great combat power, so Yoon Sang-min would be able to make great progress if he killed him.

“The day is cold. The golems might come. It is better to make a decision quickly.”

“...” The man, Hee-chul, walked forward with the two people. Then he looked at the golem behind Yoon Sang-min. “You can control this.”

“Didn’t I tell you? I have a talented person. Besides, look at these people. It is the power of cooperation that can’t be achieved through violence.”

Hee-chul nodded and placed his hands in his pocket. Victory.

Feeling excited, Yoon Sang-min held out his hand before the other could pull out the tickets. But... What came out of Hee-chul’s pocket wasn’t an item. It wasn’t something that could be passed over.

A fist. The fist stopped just in front of Yoon Sang-min’s face. “Indeed. You don’t have the talent for a poker face. I was right.” The man said.

His face was distorted in anger, but Yoon Sang-min had enough sense to move back.

In a voice that had no volume control, he ordered Kim Jin-tae who controlled the golem. “Catch him!” Kim Jin-tae moved immediately. He was used to controlling the golem for two days

already. The golem quickly flew towards Hee-chul.

Kwang!

There was the sound of stone hitting stone. People noticed the sound and carefully looked. It was another golem. It came from the direction of Hee-chul's party and held a club.

"T-this..." Did the woman with Hee-chul have the capability to control the golem?

It didn't matter. Yoon Sang-min calmed himself. Even if they each had a golem, Yoon Sang-min had dozens of allies. Before Yoon Sang-min could give any instructions, Kim Sung-tae was already leading the others into combat postures.

"Give it up!"

"... Hey. There are a lot of you." Hee-chul said as he looked at all the people who came out of the building. This was it. At that moment, Yoon Sang-min stiffened.

"..."

Now the sight of Hee-chul was remarkably similar to his female cousin that he saw before. It was the atmosphere, rather than the outward appearance.

What the? Come to think of it, Yoon Sang-min hadn't focused on the words that came from the mouth of the golem.

"Tecka nop ka seb qu?" Do you need help, Citizens? The golem asked in a gentle tone.

"De fork Te mei, joo re." It was asking the man. Hee-chul replied with a pretty awkward pronunciation. And she, Yoon Ji-hee who was Hee-chul's key, responded as the controller.

"Re Iooy Ewe Kee De Grefeb." Catch all the barbarians threatening us. It was a neat pronunciation and accent.

Yoon Sang-min realized with irritation. It wasn't Hee-chul, but Yoon Ji-hee who resembled his cousin. Her face was filled with confidence. The atmosphere was exactly the same. Something he wanted but always failed at. The atmosphere of a genius was absolutely impossible for him to reach. She was the same type of human.

Yoon Sang-min's eyes shook. In the darkness, 200 golems had surrounded them without a sound. Then they faithfully followed the words of the citizen.

Chapter 32 – Day 7, 7th Floor Change

‘Citizen. How can I help you?’ That was the question that the golems always asked before they struck. Although I didn’t see it myself, most people would have either replied in Korean or ran away. Thus, they were recognized as ‘barbarians.’ This was a fact that I heard directly from the golems.

“Ack!”

“N-no!”

It was pandemonium as the golems started attacking people. A golem ignored the flames blowing from a staff and crushed the hand that held it. A woman shrieked. A man struck a golem’s leg with a hammer, causing the golem to pause for a moment. However, the man’s legs were destroyed by another golem.

Yoon Ji-hee’s order wasn’t to ‘kill’ but to ‘catch’ them. Indeed, the golems didn’t kill anybody. This was possible due to the overwhelming difference in power.

“... Oh my god.” Yang Su-jin watched with an expression of incredulity. She gazed at the mess, Yoon Ji-hee and then back towards me.

‘Excuse me. Oppa.’ Yang Su-jin spoke with her eyes. She nodded towards Yoon Ji-hee. There was slight unease on Yang Su-jin’s face. ‘That woman, isn’t she dangerous?’

Yoon Ji-hee was the only one who could control 200 golems. If she wanted to eat us then Yang Su-jin and I wouldn't be able to escape death. Yang Su-jin was worried about it.

I just smiled and shook my head. I approached Yoon Ji-hee, raised a hand to her shoulder and instructed her in a soft voice. "When it is over, make them kneel down in that building. Have a few golems watch over them." Over the last two days, my relationship with Yoon Ji-hee had changed a lot.

Was it a little strange to say there was a relationship? At least, her attitude towards me was definitely different. She didn't have the timid attitude anymore. Instead of gazing elsewhere, she now looked into my eyes from time to time.

I didn't tell her to do it, but she would occasionally come up to me to report on her learning or ask a question that seemed quite basic. Of course, her intentions in doing so were obvious.

'Know me. Praise me more. Recognize me.'

No one had ever praised Yoon Ji-hee. Despite being the granddaughter of a chaebol, she was always treated as rabble. She always received praise from those 'under' her. She wouldn't hear the praise of a person in that position.

Parents and grandparents. The prestigious teachers and her cousins all ignored her. She wanted to receive a compliment from them. Until an hour ago, I was her lifeline. Whether it was in

reality or the dungeon, she was always overwhelmed.

The act itself was a calculation, but my words of praise were sincere. She wasn't stupid, and she knew it as well. In addition, she knew that I knew it.

Yoon Ji-hee responded to my instructions. "Yes." She nodded with a firm expression. In fact, she only spoke a few words because she was busy concentrating on her task.

It took less than 10 minutes to subdue the other group. A total of 31 people, including Yoon Sang-ah and Yoon Sang-min, were kneeling down in the building. There were originally 36 people, but some died due to unfortunate incidents.

"I'm sorry... I should have given my orders more carefully..."

"Don't blame yourself. This is good enough." I counted the ratio of males and females. Out of 31 people, nine were females. There were 22 males. "I will eat the men. The females will be handed over to Ji-hee. I think that men and women will have talents that suit that their respective genders well."

This was obvious to Yoon Ji-hee. Yoon Ji-hee nodded. She didn't show any signs of resentment for being unfairly deprived. Rather, she was surprised at the share she was given.

Hrmm. I looked towards Yang Su-jin and smiled. "W-What?" She asked.

“Looking at this situation, Yang Su-jin didn’t do anything but...” In my case, there was a clear justification in eating more of the profits. “Still... Should there be some distribution to you? If Ji-hee is willing, then it would be good to divide your share with Su-jin.”

Yoon Ji-hee nodded a few times before I finished speaking. “Yes, I will.” It felt like it was her own decision, rather than her paying attention to my reaction... It wasn’t a bad thing.

Yang Su-jin approached me and whispered in a puzzled voice. “What is this?”

”Don’t you like it? She is giving it freely.”

“No...” Until one hour ago, Yoon Ji-hee was just excess baggage to Yang Su-jin. That excess baggage suddenly became the core of the seventh floor.

“Even though pride is important, it is useless in front of everything else.”

“...”

“Well, let’s split it in two.” His experience for Persuasion seemed to rise a little bit.

I didn’t intent to intervene directly but... “Don’t do this Unni!

Please!” I looked back to see Yoon Sang-ah on her knees before Yoon Ji-hee. She was begging with a face full of tears and a runny nose. “I’ll apologize, huh? I really didn’t know what I was doing... I apologize for the whole thing.”

“...”

“T-that, we are still family! Yes? I really don’t want it to end here, I don’t want it. Unni, please... Please...” If she was an ordinary person, then it would already be too late. I would have yelled ‘bad girl!’ but Yoon Ji-hee just looked down with a miserable expression.

I approached her from behind. She turned to me. “That... How...?”

“If you want her to live then I will allow it.” I said, despite it being contrary to my thoughts.

“Still... Are you sure?”

“Like I said, didn’t I entrust the females to Yoon Ji-hee? The method of disposing of them is up to you.” Hope flashed through Yoon Sang-ah’s eyes. I continued speaking.

“But if I had to add my personal opinion, remember the words and actions that this person did to Ji-hee not long ago. Honestly, humans don’t change that much. Ji-hee’s mind will simply become easier. That is it. Of course, Ji-hee’s autonomy is what matters

most. Unfortunately, I can't insert my intentions.”

“...”

“I want you to make a choice that you can accept.” Yoon Ji-hee’s mood changed subtly. I said it. She had autonomy.

What choice would she make? There was no way to figure out what Yoon Ji-hee, who was timid, would choose. Moreover, her complicated relationship with her cousins made it hard to decide if she would kill them or not.

It wasn’t hesitation that filled her eyes now. She made a decision, so it was filled with the intent to act. She desperately made a decision. After coming to a conclusion, there was a slight chill in her eyes as she watched her cousin.

“Unni...”

“D-Do you remember? The winter vacation in high school... W-what did you say to my friends who visited South Korea...?”

“I was immature at that time. Unni! You know. I seriously...”

“S-S-Shut up!”

Squash!

Yoon Ji-hee slapped Yoon Sang-ah's cheek. Tears flowed down from Yoon Ji-hee's eyes. She could barely speak properly as she let out all the things that had piled up in the meantime. It was just like the bullies commonly seen in dramas, or even worse.

I wasn't the one who tapped on the shoulder of the agitated Yoon Ji-hee. It was Yang Su-jin. "Can I help?"

"... Yes?"

"A hit like that isn't really good. Watch."

There was no need for my intervention, so I turned away. I stood in front of one of the golems outside the building. Due to Yoon Ji-hee's instructions, they recognized me as a civilized person. I wanted to try an experiment.

I picked up a broken sidewalk block and scratched some letters on it. I wasn't sure with speaking or listening, but I was quite used to reading and writing.

I wrote the following words to the golem. "I can't speak or listen. Would it be possible to talk in writing?"

I didn't expect it, but the statue responded to the words! "That's right." To my surprise, it used a slate as a notepad. The letters were small and neat like a person had written it.

"The monsters during the day, can you handle them?"

“That’s right.”

“Why haven’t you handled them so far? Because there are no citizens?”

“No. Even if it is an act to protect the citizens, we can’t move during the day without any instructions. This is because there is room to be exploited as a weapon.”

The purpose of this question was because I didn’t think the right method was to force the power from the golems. If the locusts could be eradicated, then the device would be able to receive pure sunlight after the building’s roof was opened.

“The locusts lay their eggs deep in rocks. So once a year, we receive orders to work.”

“From the citizens of this place?”

“That’s right.”

“... Where did they go?” It was a question of pure curiosity. Unlike the other questions, the golem took a long time to reply. It seemed like the machine was running through some difficult answers.

The moment that the golem was about to reply...

“Oppa.” I turned my head. Yoon Ji-hee and Yang Su-jin were covered with blood. “We have finished.”

“...”

I looked at Yoon Ji-hee. Was it due to the shock from the murder? She was shaking a little bit, but I didn’t see any pain or guilt on her face. There was only one thing she needed right now. “Well done. That was a difficult decision and you handled it very neatly. You have more determination than I thought.”

“This unni, she learns very fast.” I wouldn’t ask what Yoo Ji-hee had learned.

I told Yoon Ji-hee about my communication with the golem. I told her to instruct the golems to hunt the locusts once it was daytime. It was just a guess, but I felt like there was something more behind the eradication of the locusts.

I went back into the building in order to finish off my share. “Indeed.” The violent trail of the two women was still left behind. Compared to the other eight women who died quite painlessly, Yoon Sang-ah’s body... No, I wouldn’t say it.

I smelt urine from the 21 men still kneeling. “Don’t worry. I don’t have any personal feelings towards you. If you place your head on the floor, I promise that I will try to finish this as painlessly as possible.”

Come to think of it, my words sounded quite bloody in its own way. However, I was becoming more and more used to killing inside the dungeon. My spirit was focused. The line in the dungeon and the line in reality... If I kept going on, I had to maintain these lines or else I would become a monster.

Bam! Bam! Bam bam!

One by one, I killed them with as little pain as possible. I ignored the words that popped up, to the point of hurting my eyes, as I took 21 lives one by one. Although it wasn't intended, the last person remaining was Yoon Sang-min.

“I’m sorry.”

“No... Strangely, I don’t really care.” He had a detached expression on his face. He would have seen his sister die in a dreadful manner. “Even if it wasn’t you, I think that I would eventually meet my end here. The world is wide.”

“...”

“A life without greed. That might be okay. As you said, it might be just right for a person like me.” There were tears in his eyes as he spoke. I understood it to a certain extent.

We were the same type of people, and there was no guarantee that anything positive could be gained from this. I knew it through

experience. No matter how I tried to mentally heal myself, the bitterness echoed deep in my heart.

I wondered why I was here. Why couldn't I go up higher?

Bam!

I finished off Yoon Sang-min. From behind me, I could hear footsteps as Yoon Ji-hee and Yang Su-jin walked in. As I turned my head, I could see that the outside was already becoming brighter.

I needed to collect the items. Money and tickets. I looked at the two women to command them, but wasn't able to say anything. It was because the two females were looking at me with expressions of severe shock.

I immediately looked behind me, but there was nothing. I could only see the corpses. "Why...?"

Burst.

From my mouth, blood flowed down like a waterfall. It was my blood. Then I realized something: the blood was even flowing from my eyes and nose.

Crunch.

"Ugh!"

“Oppa!” It felt like something invisible was holding me as my bones and muscles twitched and twisted. My right arm stretched and bent at an impossible angle. Among my cracking skin, there was blood as well as a dark black liquid.

Yang Su-jin ran over and barely supported my collapsing body. “W-What do I do? Just hold on. Oppa. I...” Yang Su-jin’s voice and face became blurred. At that moment, the words that had continuously been updating suddenly became clear.

[Health: 18]

[Muscle strength: 20]

[Agility: 17]

[Reflexes: 18]

I barely opened my mouth, but my voice didn’t come out. My mouth was empty. I realized that it was because all my teeth were missing as I moved my tongue.

[Your physical abilities have exceeded the limits of modern human beings.]

[Constitution, aptitude and other variables are being calculated.]

[There is a probability correction due to the function of the unique talent – Atlas.]

[Probability of success: 42%]

What? What had a 42% probability of success? I didn't consider myself that lucky. Finally, I read the last words that emerged.

[Physical Reconstruction Protocol – Metamorphosis begins.]

Chapter 33 – Day 7, 7th Floor Favour

My eyes opened. “Ah...” Except for a little headache, my body felt strangely refreshed. It felt like I had a shower after waking up. I confirmed that I was alive. Where was this place?

It was the dungeon. Perhaps it was still the seventh floor, but I was laid on a stone bed in a clean room. The blanket on the bed and clothes laid out looked like they came from the store on the fifth floor.

Yoon Ji-hee and Yang Su-jin?

The answers to my questions were soon revealed. Footsteps were heard on the other side of the door and Yang Su-jin entered with a plate of food.

“Oppa!” Yang Su-jin was so surprised that she almost dropped the plate.

I asked a question. “How long was I out?”

“Oh, a week or so.” It was a time frame I hadn’t imagined, so I was surprised.

“And is it right to express it as ‘sleep’? Oppa wasn’t a real person until a few hours ago.”

“What?”

Yang Su-jin sighed. “You were constantly bleeding and a strange liquid kept flowing from you... There were also many sounds. In fact, I almost sent Oppa rolling down the stairs.”

Immediately after I collapsed, Yang Su-jin tried to open the door to the next floor before the sun was fully up. But she had to wait a few hours because the locusts had already emerged.

“At first, Oppa’s condition was really bad. Your ribs were even exposed. But as I watched, something strange happened. Your body collapsed but was recovering at the same time.” Yang Su-jin made a decision at this point. She could drag him down the stairs at any time, so she just watched his status.

“Oppa, were you attacked or something? But that doesn’t make sense does it? You don’t have a recovery ability like me. After examining everything, there was nothing related to poison.”

“You tested for ingredients?”

Yang Su-jin hesitated for a moment before shyly poking out her tongue. “That... I tasted some of Oppa’s blood as well as the liquid.”

“...”

“It was really very sharp.” She was an abnormal person.

“Uh, anyway. So after taking a disinfectant potion, I took turns taking care of Oppa with Ji-hee unni. After the third day, your skin wasn’t so bad and food passed down your throat.” Yang Su-jin spoke while handing me the plate.

It contained a bowl of something that seemed like steaming hot porridge. It was bread sold on the fifth floor that was covered in hot water. From the fifth day onwards, I was moved to this room for better hygiene.

“Once every six hours, I would wipe your body with some vinegar water in order to calm down the sores... I-I learnt it while caring for my grandmother, so don’t look at me with that expression.”

“...” As Yang Su-jin said, my body smelt faintly of vinegar, but it was really clean.

“Thank you.”

“Huh?”

One week. If Yang Su-jin had sent me down the stairs, then wouldn’t my body be collapsed even outside the dungeon? Even if I survived, one week would have passed in reality. Although the stairs would appear in my room, I would be unconscious and unable to enter.

“Thank you. If you weren’t there then I might have died.” The

success rate of 42% might have risen due to her actions. I beckoned to Yang Su-jin. After she came over, I stroked her head with my hand.

“Ah!” Yang Su-jin reacted like a cat having water poured on it. “Why do that all of a sudden? Don’t do that! Do you think I am Ji-hee unni? I won’t be twisted by praise.”

“Ji-hee unni?” Speaking of which, the suffix had changed.

“While taking care of you, Unni was the only one I could speak with for a week. She isn’t as stupid as I thought.” I sat up on the bed.

[Muscle strength: 20] [Health: 18] [Reflexes: 18]

[Agility: 17] [Charisma: 15] [Concentration: 15]

[Willpower: 15] [Memory: 14] [Endurance: 14]

[Sense of Balance: 14] [Planning: 13] [Insight: 13]

[Emotional Control: 13] [Spatial perception: 13]

[Eloquence: 13] [Thinking Power: 13] [Karma: 13]

[Descriptive Ability: 12] [Logic: 12] [Charm: 12]

[Dexterity: 12]

My physical abilities were significantly higher, probably due to the Atlas talent. To be honest, I didn't get the feeling that I had changed just by the numbers alone. The first change I felt was my nose.

Allergic Rhinitis. It was a chronic illness that I had been living with since I was a child. It wasn't really severe, but it was sometimes hard during dusty days.

I closed my eyes and my mouth, then breathed in. Originally, it would feel very uncomfortable if I didn't breath with my mouth... Now there was the exhilarating feeling of something cool entering my nose! It was different from the air I had been breathing all this time.

The second change could be felt in my mouth. I had a molar removed. Due to my home life, I was too late to get the nerve treatment to stop the rotting. Due to the rotten root, the tooth had to be pulled out. I didn't get an implant, but the empty space now had a very strong tooth. It wasn't just that. As I ran my tongue around my mouth, I could feel a smooth texture.

“What's changed?”

“It seems like... many things.” It felt like my eye level with Yang Su-jin had changed. Was I taller? It didn’t seem like I grew that much. At most, three centimetres?

“Maybe it is more than Oppa thinks.”

“Really?”

Yang Su-jin was staring blankly at my face. “Well, there is no mirror here... Come. You should eat.” I accepted the bowl that Yang Su-jin handed me. The bowl containing the bread porridge was warm.

“How did you boil this?”

“Look out the window.” I took a few steps. I almost spat the moment I looked out the window. The city had changed so much in just one week. Locusts couldn’t be seen anywhere. The ruined buildings and most of the broken roads were neatly repaired. The golems could be seen working hard on the streets.

Rather than holding weapons, their hands were carrying various materials from the ruin.

“According to Ji-hee unni, they’re not just guards. From the maintenance of the city, to the purification of the environment, they seemed to have done everything for the people living here.” Yang Su-jin explained.

“... Great.”

“The generator also supplies power to the whole city, not just the door. There is heating at night, a pump that pulls up water from underground, and even something similar to gas stoves. That’s how I boiled this.”

I left the building. Yoon Ji-hee was sitting on a street bench and reading a book. She looked up as my shadow moved over her. Her face stiffened for a moment, before tears formed in her eyes. Both hands covered her nose and mouth as she sniffled.

“I heard from Su-jin. It was really hard work.” Unlike with Yang Su-jin, I felt a bit awkward. I hurriedly changed to another topic. “Before I collapsed, I asked the golem something...”

Kung! Kukung!

At the sound of something heavy falling, Yoon Ji-hee and I stared down the street with surprise. The golems were all laying their materials on the ground. Then their heads turned this way. Were they looking at me?

Soon, the golems headed this way. It wasn’t just the golems near here. In an instant, more than 100 golems were flocking to my side. The confused Yoon Ji-hee shouted something to the golems but they didn’t even pretend to listen.

“Go inside the building.”

“Huh? But...”

“There is no need to be scared. If I’m right, they won’t stop Ji-hee from moving. Go on.” I was right. The golems showed no reaction to Yoon Ji-hee who moved past them. As more and more golems came from the streets in every direction, the wave of golems was the only thing that could be seen.

“If you want to check something, then do it quickly. Don’t just stand there.” At my words, all the golems simultaneously raised their right hand.

Kung!

It would be a lie if I said I wasn’t afraid for a moment. I reflexively raised both fists to my chin, but their hands didn’t move towards me. Their palms were touching their chests. It was like a salute. The following actions were in the same vein.

Kung!

They went down on one knee and bowed their heads towards me. It was a grand sight.

[The Small Sun Knights are paying their respects to the new monarch.]

It wasn't something I hadn't thought of. I could roughly guess this 'story.' This city was now mine because I had cleaned it up. It was like this. But was the dungeon system so flexible? After all, it was Yoon Ji-hee that had saved the city instead of me. It wasn't a complaint but...

"It was my judgment." Someone spoke. I turned around. A stone statue was standing before me. "It is a bit off from the principle, but it seemed right."

I had seen it before. The statue that sold the item to me on the fifth floor.

"Thank you..."

"Isn't this a beautiful city?" The statue spoke bluntly, but its voice was full of emotions. "Isaiah loved the followers here." I listened carefully to the words of the stone statue. "They were expelled from the empire, and every place above ground turned against them, forcing them down here. They didn't care about the danger of going down, since they had a god."

"... Is that the sun?"

"That's right." The artificial sun warmed up the large underground space and powered the golems and entire city. I didn't know the details, but it was something that modern science couldn't do.

“They were a proud people to Isaiah. Although they were dependent on the sun, they didn’t settle for reality. Dozens of seeds were grown in suitable soil and they created sophisticated devices powered by the sun.”

I once again looked at the golems.

“The gods are those who live off of the dreams of their believers. The citizens here were always dreaming as they continued to make progress. Thanks to them, Isaiah was able to become a god strong enough that he wasn’t ashamed in front of other gods.”

“Until they left here.” I said. The stone statue gazed at me. If it had a facial expression, then I think it would look surprised. How did I know? “The city was simply ruined. If it was destroyed by an invasion, then the golems would be smashed and the damage would be worse.”

“I see.”

“So why did they leave here?” I asked the question that I had previously asked the golem.

“They didn’t need it anymore. The city they built, the sun, their temples, their desires... Since the day that the gods were abandoned by their followers, they weren’t called gods anymore.”

Desires... Something was a little strange. It was like all desire had

been wiped from the group. Still, I knew one thing. There was a god called Isaiah.

“I spoke for too long. Anyway, the important thing is that you are the new owner of this place.”

[The territories and facilities of Talia belong to you.]

[You can amend the laws in Talia and have obtained citizenship rights.]

[The Small Sun Knights will place your commands as the top priority. You can modify the behavioural rules of the Small Sun Knights.]

[The spatial coordinates of City – Talia has been marked.]

“... I wanted to ask, this is the seventh floor right? If I go down the stairs, then I won’t be able to come back here.”

“That’s right. It is usually the case.” If so, what was the use? Of course, I didn’t intend to say that to the statue. Still, it could read my mind.

“Just think of it as an example of my sincerity. It has been a really long time since I’ve seen the city look like this. I’d like to do much more, but this much is the extent of it...”

“I don’t want to lose it... Actually, I was a bit thrilled when I became a monarch.” The statue laughed.

[Isiah the Sun God acknowledges you as the monarch of Talia.]

[Isiah the Sun God thanks you.]

“Is this really helpful?”

“Unfortunately, yes.” Isaiah laughed at me.

The stone statue felt like a threat, but in that moment, I felt no nervousness at all.

I wanted to stay on the seventh floor for a longer time. I wanted to stay as long as possible to read books and raise my talents. But the unexpected obstacle was money.

I had consumed all my money when I visited the fifth floor. It was the same with Yoon Sang-min. He bought only enough food for a few days. Then he spent the rest of his silver on return tickets.

Yoon Ji-hee and Yang Su-jin spent the week living on what little money was remaining and bought supplies to help me.

“Originally, I wasn’t planning to convey it directly, but it will be a few days before you enter the eighth floor.” Isaiah said before I went down the stairs. “It is a type of motivation. It is to take away the burden of going to this place everyday at midnight, and to give you time to realize the abilities you have obtained.”

“Can’t you tell me more?” I selfishly asked. In fact, he told a story but left the questions I wanted to ask without any explanations. Isaiah laughed once again.

“That’s right.” Then he disappeared from sight.

“What is that?” I grumbled while Yang Su-jin headed towards the stairs first. In fact, she and Yoon Ji-hee had run out of food two days ago. The little bit of food was left for me, and I had eaten the last piece of bread.

“By the way Oppa, be sure to look in the mirror when you get back. Understand?”

“What?” Yang Su-jin had already disappeared down the stairs by the time I asked. Yoon Ji-hee nodded shyly towards me before also disappearing.

I didn’t go down right away. Until I became hungry and thirsty, I checked how much my body had changed and practiced

controlling my strength.

[7th floor cleared.]

I drank a glass of water as soon as I got up. I wanted a shower with hot water. I quickly took off my clothes and entered the bathroom. I was just about to walk through the door of the shower.

Chak.

Something gently hit one side of my thigh. I looked down.

“...?”

It was the culprit. What? You know... The male companion... I guess. Every male has that one friend below. It was swaying and hitting my thigh. There was nothing wrong with this itself. The problem was that it was in a non-combat state. No, in the first place... This was my friend, right?

“...? ...? ...?”

I checked my friend with trembling hands. No. However I looked, this wasn't my friend. It was a friend I was intimate with,

so naturally I knew the dimensions better than anyone else. In a battle state... Even though it was this much larger... No, just the colour alone...

I couldn't keep my gaze from wandering below as I entered the shower. I was so busy worrying that I forgot about the boiler and cold water gushed out. I jumped forward with surprise.

Until then, I had no idea. Why had Yang Su-jin asked me to look in the mirror?

"..." I was so surprised that I forgot about the coolness of the cold water. I thought I had finished the investigation of my changed body on the seventh floor. That wasn't all of it.

I stared at the person in the mirror and muttered grimly. "Who are you?!"

Chapter 34 – Day 8, Vacation

It was clearly my face in the mirror.

At least, the features were clearly mine. It was still my eyes, nose and mouth. The whole face was a familiar face that I'd seen thousands of times in the mirror.

But there were slight differences, and those subtle differences had huge results. The height of both eyes and their distance from my nose, the degree in which the corners of my mouth drooped, the slopes of my chin and face, all of them had changed. My face was perfectly symmetrical. No imbalances could be seen. Just that alone made me look completely different.

Furthermore, my skin... It had been hard to feel a big difference when just looking down at my body. But when I looked at my face, it was like taking out a piece of wood and replacing it with marble. The blackheads and acne scars that I had been troubled with since adolescence were gone.

I raised a hand to my cheek and felt the texture of hard boiled eggs. It was like peeling off the exterior to reveal the completely moist inside. There was a smooth elasticity.

My eyes moved down. This wasn't the first time that my muscles had swelled up and hardened. I was able to see my forearms and chest getting bigger as my muscle strength became higher. But now the shape had altered. My chest and abs were neatly symmetrical with my shoulders. Further down, my friend was still

in a non-combat state...

I regained my spirit. I hurried and washed my body. I had been looking at myself for almost an hour! It couldn't be like this. I hadn't finished studying for the liberal arts exam that was tomorrow. There were also a few books that I needed to borrow from the library.

I took out a t-shirt and pants. Then...

Ssik!

There was a ripping sound as the t-shirt couldn't withstand the pressure. My clothes didn't fit; my shoulders were wider than the t-shirt, my pants were too tight at the waist and way too short, revealing my ankles. The coat was the worst. If it had fit, then I could somewhat use it to cover for everything else, but I couldn't get my shoulders into it either.

Did I have to buy new clothes? I ended up wearing stretchy sportswear as I checked the mirror. Fortunately, it didn't look too strange.

"Ah, d*mn." After drying my hair, it became completely like a chestnut burr. This couldn't be left alone.

Downtown, near the university.

Kim Sung-yi, the lead hairdresser of the ‘Saint-Pierre Hair Shop’ was drinking a cup of coffee at the counter next to the receptionist. Even though it was early on a weekday, females who finished their exams early would soon be looking for a hair salon to change their mood.

After lunch, she would probably be held hostage by customers for the rest of the day. ‘Should I just have an early lunch? A sandwich...’ Just as she was thinking that... The door opened.

A man entered the beauty salon. “Welcome...” Kim Sung-yi swallowed her breath. The man looked pretty messy at first sight. His shaggy hair reminded her of a prisoner from the Joseon period. The worn out sweatshirt and pants revealed his wrists and ankles.

However, his face ended the mess. It wasn’t a completely handsome face, nor the western face that had become popular in the 21st century. It was more perfect than beautiful. Clean skin. Perfectly symmetrical facial features and body features that couldn’t be hidden by the loose sports wear.

“A-Are you looking for the boss?”

“...? Nope.” The man responded in a tremulous voice. “I’m here to get my hair cut.”

“Eh... Do you have someone who is in charge of...”

“It’s my first time here.”

“So, you don’t have a particular... person in mind?”

“No. Anyone will do. Anyone.” The man speaking, Hee-chul, looked around the beauty salon. It was like he was evaluating the ‘grade’ of the beauty salon.

‘... I am overreacting.’ Kim Sung-yi thought. Either way, he was just a young man. He wouldn’t worry too much about his appearance.

When Hee-chul came out to buy clothes, he saw the beauty salon. However, the atmosphere was too luxurious. He was also the only male. In addition, such a beggar like appearance... Hee-chul’s heart beat quickly at the sight.

‘I just went anywhere.’ Hee-chul sighed deeply as he thought of the 7,000 won male specialty hairdressers that he normally went to.

The two females thought he was sighing for a different reason.

‘Does he not like it here?’ The boss looked at Kim Sung-yi. Kim Sung-yi looked back at her boss. Of course she knew... this was the only break she would be able to have today. In addition, there were two other hairdressers who were free.

But this was a matter that involved the shop's pride. 'Sung-yi. Please.' The boss conveyed these words to Kim Sung-yi using her eyes. Kim Sung-yi nodded with a determined face.

"Can you come this way?" She was certain as she led him to a seat. The feeling coming from this person wasn't just because of his face. Was it charisma? Aura? Kim Sung-yi had spent her apprenticeship in Apgujeong. It was a place where she had quite a few celebrity customers.

That's why Kim Sung-yi was sensitive to this feeling. When she saw famous actors, she could see the same halo surrounding them. It wasn't just because of his looks. In the entertainment industry, the successful ones had a similar aura. Her old boss called it 'class.'

'Uh, he might be a famous model.' He might have been taking a concept photo. The sports clothes might be a drastic attempt at trendy fashion.

"How do you wan... Omo." She felt a gentle softness flowing through her fingers as she raised her hand to the man's hair. It was like touching silk. Even though the man's hair was short, the texture was something that couldn't be felt just from a day or two of hair care.

'Scalp... look at the scalp.' Even a scalp that had just been washed wouldn't be so clean. Despite the mess, the man's hair wasn't matted. Obviously, this man was part of the 'industry.'

"Why are you looking like that?" The man asked.

“Ah, no. Do you have a style that you want?”

“Just make it neat.”

“... Yes?”

“Give me a haircut that is as neat as possible. That’s all.”

“...”

This was... He seemed like someone who had never been to a beauty salon before.

While Kim Sung-yi was in turmoil, Hee-chul saw a discount guide on the side of the mirror. ‘What? A 20% discount in winter... A cut is 40,000 won?!’ It seemed like he had chosen the wrong store. The most expensive cut that Hee-chul had ever experienced was 25,000 won. The outside of this salon looked expensive, but he thought it would only be up to that amount.

It might have been different if he knew a while ago, but he couldn’t get up now that he was already sitting down.

Huu. Hee-chul gave a deep sigh.

That sigh was misinterpreted and sharply pierced Kim Sung-yi’s lungs. Was he laughing at her? ‘O...Okay.’ She wouldn’t hesitate

any longer. Yes. She was Kim Sung-yi. She had an interest in the beauty industry since her childhood. Her efforts paid off, and she became recognized as a top hairdresser by her mid-20s.

‘Will I be intimidated by this atmosphere?’ She gave a small snort. The hand holding her scissors was tense. She didn’t know what this person wanted, but she would show him more than he could imagine. In the 30 minutes that followed, Kim Sung-yi poured out all the dreams, efforts and passion that she had accumulated for nearly a decade.

Later, this scene would be her most memorable memory in her entire career. A cut that was comparable to 400,000 won, not 40,000 won!

Hee-chul regretfully used his credit card for the first time before leaving. Exactly ten minutes later., the male clerk in the nearby outlet store was going through a situation not that much different from Kim Sung-yi.

I couldn’t think about the money that I spent. My head... It didn’t seem worth 40,000 won. I went to buy some clothes and was suddenly offered lots of things. Of course, I didn’t go beyond the basics. I looked at the internet for seasonal outfits and just bought as much as I needed currently.

... Except for one cardigan.

“...”

“I can’t stop looking. It’s really amazing.” Dong-wook hyung was joking around. I’d met up with him an hour later, and he was surprised at how much someone could change in one day. I came up with the ridiculous excuse that I had been secretly exercising and managing my body for the past few months.

I had been training my body steadily. I maintained a slouched posture with the people I knew. Really, it was such a tedious thing. However, there was no better explanation to explain my height increase and larger body. In fact, Dong-wook hyung didn’t really understand the explanation.

“You... Really... Hey... You’ve been working out. I don’t think you would make that up.” He thought I cleansed my skin using BB cream, with the new clothes giving me a different atmosphere. In fact, what could he do even if he didn’t believe it? The different hair style also helped to a certain extent.

“Anyway, you look good. You should keep doing that in the future.”

“I’m going to try.” I smiled and climbed up the stairs of the building. It was empty due to the exam period, although it was perfect for studying. However, I was going to meet a friend whose test finished early. Otherwise, I wouldn’t have come here.

“Hiii!” My friend stiffened as he looked over here.

“You...”

“This is really Hee-chul. Or at least, he claims that he is Hee-chul.” Dong-wook laughed at the sight before him. “But what are you doing? Your exam is over.”

“Didn’t you see? Jae-hak sunbae has come to play in one of the rooms. That’s why there are many people right now.”

“Jae-hak hyung?” Dong-wook was surprised. Ha Jae-hak was a computer engineering major and could be described as the idol of our university. He originally enrolled in the school’s medical department, but it didn’t fit his aptitude, so he switched to computer engineering.

Two years ago, he created a start-up with a group of friends from his academic circles. The smartphone market had explosively developed during the last few years, and he created a marketing intermediary platform called ‘Green Web’... It hit the jackpot.

“How much was Green Web sold for?”

“Three billion won supposedly. JC Soft bought it. Jae-hak hyung... He ate 20% of that.”

As Dong-wook hyung was talking, my friend took out his phone and looked at it. “Then I will be going now. Go there and say hi. There is a fun competition.”

Fun competition?

My friend waved his hand as he walked away, and we entered the room. Like my friend said, a competition was waiting.

It wasn't fun.

There was a bustling atmosphere in the room. It was because of Ha Jae-hak.

"But are you really going to the UCPC (UZ Collegiate Programming Cup)? Hyung doesn't need to enter, do you?"

It was a programming competition for university students that was regularly hosted by UZ, a large company. Of course, there was no need for Ha Jae-hak to enter. He had created a business that was sold for three billion won.

Ha Jae-hak replied to the question. "Well. It's fun, even if I don't care about the prize money or specs. I just don't want to lose. Aren't you curious? If I compete in such a competition, how far would I go?"

"Ohh."

Ha Jae-hak was a 'born talent.' So he could do things he liked without much pressure or burden. It wasn't a bluff, but a sincerity

that came from his mindset. The junior students were paying respect and admiration to Ha Jae-hak.

While listening to his words, they were looking over a ‘problem.’ It was a question that somebody had asked a few minutes ago just for fun. A junior student had asked about the fact that one team member still hadn’t been selected for the UCPC.

As a result, a contest was held on the spot. They picked a problem from an overseas programming forum and all students, including Ha Jae-hak, participated to see who could solve it. If a student solved it faster than they 100% passed. Thus, people were busy thinking about how to solve it.

‘Cute people.’ Ha Jae-hak smiled quietly as he looked around at all his juniors. It was quite enjoyable to see. At that moment, the door opened.

“Jae-hak hyung!” Dong-wook, a junior he knew, entered as well as... It was a very charming male junior that he saw for the first time. Dong-wook came up and greeted Ha Jae-hak. The other junior just glanced at him once.

Then he heard some juniors whispering. “Eh? Hee-chul oppa?”

“Really... Originally, that...”

Ha Jae-hak stepped closer to Lee Sang-hoon. Lee Sang-hoon was a junior who admired him for a long time. “Who is that person? He

has a force about him.”

“He is Hee-chul hyung. He had the same student number.”

“... That Hee-chul?”

“I’ve been busy lately. When did he start looking like that?”

After glancing disdainfully at Hee-chul and the girls giggling over him, Lee Sang-yoon glanced at Jae-hak again. “He isn’t that much of a good guy. You should know. He studies a lot, so he gets good grades and the professors like him...”

Ha Jae-hak remembered and nodded. His memories of the school were generally consistent with Lee Sang-yoon’s evaluation. Of course, Hee-chul didn’t have a bad intelligence, but according to Ha Jae-hak’s standards of extraordinary friends, he was nothing special. Although he was sincere, he wasn’t outstanding. He didn’t have enough talent to be Ha Jae-hak’s friend.

“Hyung. Please show us the problem.”

“Ahh. Yes.” Two extra sheets of paper were pulled from the printer.

“Good!” With a motivated expression, Dong-wook approached the nearest desk and started to focus. And Hee-chul... He didn’t seem to care about solving the problem. He casually sat down at a table and was looking at it with one hand in his pocket. As if an

answer would emerge like that.

“I don’t get it. I want to throw this paper away.” Lee Sang-yoon grumbled and Ha Jae-hak focused on the problem again. Although he pretended not to be able to solve the problem, he actually hadn’t been paying attention to it. It was certainly a tricky problem.

‘Good.’ Ha Jae-hak’s mind shouted with delight. He had caught the clue to the problem. He was probably the first one.

Jakak.

At that moment, the sound of paper being folded was heard. Hee-chul had put the paper in his pocket. “Dong-wook hyung. I’m going now. There are too many people here.”

“Now? Oh, you said you needed to study for the liberal arts exam. Still, let’s solve the problem first.”

“Ah, that.” Hee-chul’s voice wasn’t loud. But as everyone was focusing, they could all hear Hee-chul’s words. “I’m done. Well, it was difficult.”

Chapter 35 – Day 8, Fishing

I was mistaken about one thing. As soon as I entered the study room, I realized it immediately.

Immediately after Hee-chul's remark, the atmosphere froze. Surprised and suspicious gazes turned towards Hee-chul. "Did you solve it?"

"Ah... Yes."

"Can you please explain it?" Ha Jae-hak asked, causing Hee-chul to reply with a surprised expression.

"Um..." Hee-chul scratched his head and looked around the room before nodding. Unlike the attitude that hesitated before speaking, the voice that emerged for his explanation was soft and smooth. "When I first saw it, I thought it was a non-polynomial, time-consuming problem. If so, the number of test cases will exceed 10 and it would be impossible to solve them in time."

"Exactly." As Ha Jae-hak focused on him, Hee-chul went on to explain it to everyone.

"But the problem has unnecessary information that are traps."

"Condition two?"

“Yes. Except for that, there are exceptions that can solve the problem, for example...” The atmosphere changed as the exchange with Ha Jae-hak continued. Suspicion and doubts. Their mouths were wide open as their irritation gradually changed.

“...Wah... This...”

“Really...”

It wasn’t because Hee-chul had solved a difficult problem that cries of admiration burst from their mouths. Actually, if it was just that, it would be annoying. This was the computer engineering department and someone had solved a problem that they had been thinking about for a while.

It might be because he was a genius, the problem was similar to one he already solved, or even just that he was in the best condition today. The main point was something else. It appeared to be a one-on-one conversation with Ha Jae-hak, but Hee-chul was actually explaining to everyone in the room.

It was never easy to understand everything through listening alone. Everyone should have experienced it in the past. They would get ‘??’ while listening to the teacher and would have to review the lesson. Students wouldn’t hear 100% of the lecture, even if the teacher had good technique.

But everyone in this place experienced it. The conversation between Hee-chul and Ha Jae-hak wasn’t something that geniuses

could interrupt. The process of solving the problem became engraved in their minds just from listening. It was far more impressive than someone solving the problem first.

Why? Was it due to Hee-chul's changed atmosphere? They couldn't say it, but was it because his voice and aura made them listen? Maybe even Hee-chul didn't know the reason.

It was often said that geniuses couldn't be good leaders. That saying wasn't 100% wrong. Those born with talent often wouldn't be able to understand the perspective of those born without it. Their ways of thinking were so different that they needed to put effort into understanding each other. A person who did it would be called a great educator or leader.

But regarding this point, Hee-chul didn't have to try. He wasn't a genius. Therefore, he knew the perspectives of those at a lower level. This was one of the most prestigious universities for computer engineering. Perhaps Hee-chul's original material was slightly below average before now. No, it might be lower.

"... So using a heuristic algorithm will allow you to pass through all the test cases. That is what I thought. To be honest, it was tough to get to this fact." Hee-chul ended his explanation.

Everyone's irritation had already disappeared. Only perfect understanding remained. It was a problem that had made them suffer for dozens of minutes. But after Hee-chul's explanation, it wasn't that 'hard.' They could sympathize with math teachers or geniuses who say 'isn't it easy?' and would then have to explain for 20 minutes.

Hee-chul's image also played a part. His head was excellent but he also worked hard.

'Hyung.' 'Oppa.'

The students all called him that in their heads. In fact, they understood the problem perfectly, but wasn't it solved due to Hee-chul? His efforts made it clear that they were duped by the traps. Everybody thought so. People were much fonder of a result that was due to effort rather than genius.

Clap clap.

Someone started applauding. Of course, it was half-hearted applause, but this brought fun into everyone's hearts, so they started clapping and whistling. "Hey, genius!"

"So cool!"

Ha Jae-hak knocked against Hee-chul's shoulder. "I heard it well. How is it? Would you like to try out this code?"

"Aish. It will be embarrassing if I am wrong, Sunbae-nim." But both Ha Jae-hak and Hee-chul knew. The thing that would emerge from the coding was the answer that Hee-chul said.

Dong-wook, who was sitting next to Hee-chul, slapped his butt.

“Ya, this brat. You are always studying when you’re actually a genius.”

“What are you talking about, Hyung?” Hee-chul replied playfully. “I am originally a genius.”

“Puhaha!” There was a burst of laughter in the room.

Hee-chul adjusted his bag and bowed towards Ha Jae-hak. “Then, I’ll be going. Sunbae-nim. Tomorrow is an exam and there is still a book I haven’t read.”

“Ah, shall we go together? I need to go to the bathroom.” All the people in the room had already opened their notebooks and were coding the solution explained by Hee-chul.

In the central hallway, Ha Jae-hak talked while walking along the path towards the bathroom and entrance. “Speaking of which, I still don’t know how to contact Hee-chul. I’ve only seen you in that study room. Can you tell me?”

“Of course.”

“Did you hear? There was a reason we were solving the problem in the first place.”

“I heard it was to join the team.”

“It is that, but there’s more.” Ha Jae-hak’s face was serious. “I’m going to start a new business, and I’m looking for members to start it with. My old friends have gone to other places.”

“Join your start-up? I haven’t finished my undergraduate years yet...”

“Was I finished? Where are the people with degrees these days? If you have the ability, then you can just take a leave of absence.”

Ha Jae-hak held up five fingers, then added the index finger of his other hand. “6%.” He was indicating the percentage of shares. “I would like to give more, but I have already decided what to give to the people who will help me.”

It was a big deal. Hee-chul roughly knew about this side of the industry. Founders usually paid around 3% to developers of start-ups. In addition, he already had a success, yet he was giving investors 6%?

“Although I’ve looked over many people, the most important thing for a developer is their sincerity and social nature. No matter how good a person is, they would be useless if they can’t keep to a schedule or if ruin the atmosphere.”

The 4D personality shown in manhwas absolutely wouldn’t work in reality. Generally, geniuses were like that.

“...”

“To be honest, Hee-chul was a friend that never entered my head despite how hard you worked until now. Does that make you feel bad?”

“Nope.”

“Not only did you fix the problem, the explanation behind it was really good. An area that developers should have is eloquence.” In fact, Ha Jae-hak also admired this point. Hee-chul had the ability to make everyone understand. It was needed when selling IT products that didn’t exist yet to the outside world. It was useful for customers, since those who couldn’t understand the concept would refuse.

To be exact, it was the effect of having 13 eloquence, 15 charisma and 12 points in descriptive ability. However, there was no way for Ha Jae-hak to know that. “How is it? If you want, then we can go to the office today.”

“Uh... I’m sorry. Sunbae-nim.” His response was 180 degrees away from what Ha Jae-hak expected. Hee-chul bowed with a really sorry expression. “Of course, you are right about being able to take a leave of absence but there is still more for me to learn.”

“... I see.”

“I am really grateful for your praise. Thank you.”

There was no displeasure in Ha Jae-hak's face when he looked at Hee-chul. Ha Jae-hak asked for a handshake with a pleasant smile. "If you mean that, then it can't be helped."

"I'm really sorry." The two shook hands.

"But, if you change your mind in the near future then please call me, it doesn't matter how late at night."

"Yes." Ha Jae-hak waved before going to the bathroom. He was conscious of Hee-chul watching him from behind.

On the other side of the hallway, someone was watching Hee-chul from the vending machine. The unaware Hee-chul headed down the stairs.

I ordered a cup of coffee from the school cafe, sipping it as I headed towards the mountain behind the school. The mountain trail behind the school was empty. It was easy to climb and there were many courses, but the hiking trails were generally quiet on weekdays.

I sometimes liked to read books while sitting on the benches.

So... I was mistaken about one thing. It was quite dangerous for someone to realize that I was going into the dungeon, just like the Yoon siblings did on the 6th day. Of course, I tried to hide it, but it became very difficult since this morning.

My appearance had changed due to Metamorphosis. Anyone who just slightly knew me would think there was a change. The people close to me were amazed, but had no choice but to accept my excuses. They didn't know about the dungeon.

But what if they knew me normally and knew about the existence of the dungeon? The excuses of exercising or using creams wouldn't work. They might think that I obtained something from the dungeon, even if they didn't know about Metamorphosis.

I realized it the moment I entered the room. A feeling that I had only felt in the dungeon. I had felt it for the first time on the fifth floor. It was the feeling I felt while playing the game for the woman's talents.

Was it a killing intent? I could feel it even as I cleared on the sixth and seventh floors. Perhaps my intuition had improved in the dungeon. I had felt it when entering the room: a vivid killing intent that I had never experienced before in reality. Was it because of Metamorphosis?

Someone knew I was in the dungeon. I didn't know why, but they were pouring hatred towards me. This wasn't the dungeon, but reality. Right now.

I had to confess that I was quite confused. That person couldn't do anything when there was a crowd. I hadn't thought about solving the problem when I first received it. But then I thought of something.

If I didn't resolve it as soon as possible, then I didn't know what would happen later. I realized that the problem in my hand was the answer.

There wasn't a single climber on the mountain. I threw my books and bags down and sat on the floor. I drank the coffee and waited. I had done everything. It was difficult.

I instantly felt the hatred towards me becoming more intense. I guess I was right. The person hated me because they were jealous. While everyone's mood had improved due to my explanation, their hatred had become thicker.

In fact, it was likely that they knew the answer. A person who entered the dungeon wouldn't have much difficulty with it. They had been conceited. Then I gobbled up the respect and recognition of the sunbaes, and that person couldn't stand it. The killing intent was enough to move them into action straight away.

"Still, I have to be honest." I muttered as I held the coffee cup.
"Acting like that in front of everyone. Honestly, I felt really good."
Maybe I felt more pleasure from showing off my talent than successfully provoking the target. I couldn't help feeling like this. I still had a long way to go.

"It is thanks to you."

"..."

I smiled at the person who showed up.

Chapter 36 – Day 8, Poker

“That look isn’t good on you, Lee Sang-yoon.”

“...”

Until I specifically confirmed the killing intent, I hadn’t thought that Lee Sang-yoon was the perpetrator. I disliked Lee Sang-yoon. Lee Sang-yoon also disliked me.

But this wasn’t a matter of emotions. It was just a matter of humiliation. I could tell just by the sour expression on his face. Regardless of the truth, some people just felt hate. “In particular, those eyes aren’t a joke.”

“You are mistaken.” Lee Sang-yoon wasn’t an idiot. His father was the president of a venture company that led the IT boom in the 90s-00s. The son had inherited his father’s brain and showed great talent. It was a wall that caused many people to feel frustrated, including me.

He had a lot of pride and couldn’t easily deal with people, but he wasn’t the type to be swept away by emotion and impulse. “If I looked like that, then I wouldn’t have come to school right away. It is just advertising that you have entered the dungeon.” He said.

He was holding a black cylinder in his hand. It was like he was holding a karaoke microphone. The distance between us was nearly three metres. It absolutely wasn’t a simple weapon. It was probably a dart gun or a similar tool with a different effect.

“Hey. Don’t even think about it. Don’t be such an idiot!” I cried out.

“...”

“So... did you come to kill ‘me’? Once you tried it, did you enjoy murdering people?”

“...?” A suspicion was forming in my mind, just from his expression. I could tell without asking. Surely, Lee Sang-yoon had already killed a person.

This wasn’t the dungeon but reality. If he didn’t have experience beforehand, then he wouldn’t give off such an obvious killing intent.

Should I try a few more tricks? This guy was someone who could kill. I knew that Lee Sang-yoon was an explorer of the dungeon. I could also reach out and easily remember where he lived.

“But still, isn’t this a little too daring?”

In my experience, the people I met on the fifth floor lived close to me in reality. The 5th floor I was on was probably the area where the explorers of my neighbourhood gathered.

Lee Sang-yoon lived in a pretty good area. 24 pyeong. It was a

residential complex villa with more than 20 floors. It was several times bigger than the old building that I lived in. I didn't know for sure, but it was likely there were quite a few explorers there. "You killed someone from the same building. What if you get caught by the police?" I asked.

"...!" My bet was a success. Lee Sang-yoon had an expression of dismay on his face. It was due to my increased insight. I could now read a variety of clues from a person's face.

"How do I know this? What else do I know? Did you really completely conceal the evidence? Are you curious?" I was provoking him. "You killed a person. Does your father know?"

"Dog scum!" Lee Sang-yoon cursed and moved quickly. He lunged forward like a fencer, with his cylinder aiming towards me at the same time. It was a completely different move from what I anticipated.

Bang!

A short but clear sound. I sensed it and turned my body. A cool sensation swept across the side of my head. The cylinder was foldable. There were three rods at the end that looked like a car antenna.

At the same time as Lee Sang-yoon stretching out his hand, it unfolded and something sprang out. If I had moved after it was fired, then I wouldn't have been able to avoid it. A normal person would die without any exceptions.

Chwaruk!

Lee Sang-yoon stared at the folded up cylinder in his hand. “What...?” A confused expression formed on Lee Sang-yoon’s face. It was his trump card. I had read the attack, but I wouldn’t have known how to avoid it if I hadn’t experienced a similar weapon before.

I immediately rushed forward. The confused Lee Sang-yoon extended the cylinder again. I didn’t read the trajectory of the cylinder in his hand, but his body. I narrowed the distance using the fairly steep downhill decline. Originally, I wouldn’t have been able to control the downward acceleration and would have fallen. However, now my lower body and ankles were stronger than before and my body was perfectly balanced.

I literally caught Lee Sang-yoon’s wrist. A dagger was shining from his other hand, but I grabbed Lee Sang-yoon’s neck without any hesitation. Once I applied strong pressure, his hands dropped the cylinder and dagger.

“Keok! Keook...!” He struggled to escape from my hand but it was useless. The difference in muscle strength was overwhelming. I threw Lee Sang-yoon’s body upwards. The body of an adult male flew over four metres.

Tang!

Lee Sang-yoon made a sick sound and rolled across the ground.

His body squirmed as he barely managed to raise his head. He was looking at me with shock and hostility. “Nonse... Nonsense, this is... How did a guy like you...?” Lee Sang-yoon was this type of person.

If I subtracted his pride and ego then he was just a body. He was the type to say sarcastic remarks when flirting with a girl. But what if someone provoked his pride first? Even if the other person was a sunbae, he wouldn’t back down.

“Keep listening to my words.” I collected the cylinder and dagger that fell to the ground and put them in my inventory. “Even if you aren’t charged with murder, just being arrested as a suspect will cause a great deal of trouble. Especially for your family.”

“...!!” It was something from the past. Lee Sang-yoon and I were both rookies. I heard stories from our sunbaes at the drinking party. The son of a great father couldn’t turn out mediocre. He wanted to succeed like his father.

Well, it probably wasn’t as extreme as the families in the dramas. Many of my friends didn’t care about things like this, but Lee Sang-yoon was a different case. He was very sensitive about the dignity of his father, almost to the point of it being an obsession. “Your father will be sad. Isn’t that right? It will probably crack the reputation of the company.”

I pulled out my cellphone and shook it lightly. I acted like there was something on it. Even if he was debating about whether I really had evidence or not, it was overwhelmingly disadvantageous towards him. Of course, it seemed like I had proof. The other

person was focused on his own misfortune.

The talents and abilities that could be gained in a dungeon. I believed in my own abilities and made full use of it. The pace easily went my way.

Lee Sang-yoon had an expression that I had never seen from him before on his face. “No... Please.”

I didn’t even have to threaten Lee Sang-yoon’s life or torture him. The hostility completely disappeared from Lee Sang-yoon’s eyes and he was half sobbing.

“What?”

“...Pl... Please.”

“Fix your pronunciation.”

“Please. My family... Don’t do any damage to my father. I’d rather...” Lee Sang-yoon closed his eyes. “If I have to die, then I would rather die innocently... You can have my talents if my family...”

Ah. Killing a person in reality really would absorb their talents. Well, apart from that... “This is a little weird.” I chuckled. “Giving me your death. Sang-yoon. It sounds really weird to say. Don’t tell me to kill you like it isn’t a bad thing.”

“...”

Getting caught for murder in reality was an ending several times more terrible than dying in the dungeon. I had killed over 20 people on the seventh floor. Playing in the dungeon had no penalty. Why would I challenge the 21st century police just to kill one person?

“Besides, it is pretty crazy. Your talents will be a mental burden thanks to the ‘real’ killing.” Lee Sang-yoon’s body shook with humiliation. “So... On the one hand, I am curious. What were you thinking when you committed a real murder?”

“You, are you saying that your hands are clean?”

“Although there is a little blood, I am not a legal killer.” I leaned forward and stared into Lee Sang-yoon’s eyes. “Therefore. From now on, keep your mouth shut unless it is to answer my questions. If you don’t want to make your father into the father of a murderer, that is.”

Father. The magic words caused Lee Sang-yoon to tremble. Perhaps this was Lee Sang-yoon’s main point. The desire that opened the dungeon for him. An obsession that dominated a person’s life. He wished to die to avoid impacting his father’s reputation. As long as he thought I had a clue to drop his father into hell, Lee Sang-yoon couldn’t resist me.

“Did you kill a person who was already out in the dungeon? Or

was it in progress?"

"Already... He was dead."

"How great. You must not have received any good talents. So are you hungry?"

"W-What do you know?"

"Your voice is going up, Lee Sang-yoon." I growled and Lee Sang-yoon became silent. It was the first time he felt this type of fear. Appearance. Academics. Fighting skills as well. He realized that I had changed quite a bit from what he knew.

"Did you even feel sorry for crossing that line?"

"..."

"Answer it quietly. Who was it? The people who drove you to do this." If Lee Sang-yoon was in a good position in the dungeon like me, he wouldn't have to resort to murder. Maybe he was being controlled by someone.

"The 5th floor... I met them for the first time."

Lee Sang-yoon was on a separate 5th floor from me. But there was also the process of picking the people for the next floor. There, Lee Sang-yoon was 2nd rank. He made very stupid choices. 3rd

rank. 4th rank. He made a suggestion up to 6th place.. He was greedy as a leader. He thought he could control the exceptional people.

But Lee Sang-yoon overlooked one thing. The rankings on the fifth floor didn't reflect the objective grade of people in the dungeons. The rankings would go up even if someone only had a good skill. It was just like the 2nd place person on my sixth floor.

It was also the case with Lee Sang-yoon. The other three were all better than Lee Sang-yoon in all aspects. Rather than being the leader, he was the dead weight during the entire battle. In the end, by the end of the sixth floor, Lee Sang-yoon had barely grown at all. He was treated as a low ranking person.

“On the seventh floor, there was nothing to see.”

“...” The world was wide. His was flat. The prideful man discovered three people with talents that surpassed him. It was to the extent that he was subordinate to them. He felt deprivation and impatience. In addition, he felt utter humiliation.

His mental state was completely destroyed and he took excessive measures. He committed murder in reality because he was desperate to narrow the gap with other people. I picked up my bag that I had placed on the ground.

“Well, I've told you everything. So please erase everything on that phone...” Lee Sang-yoon spoke.

I threw my phone towards Lee Sang-yoon without speaking. Lee Sang-yoon's hands reacted immediately and grabbed the phone.

Bam!

I slammed a fist into Lee Sang-yoon's stomach. It wasn't a targeted attack. It was just a blow to give as much pain as possible. After grabbing my phone on the ground, I spoke to Lee Sang-yoon who was vomiting. "There are two options. Report to me at the end of each floor or turn yourself in."

He could still go to the dungeon inside prison, although I wasn't totally sure about that. "That is all I can give to a criminal."

I turned around.

"You think that you are different!?" Lee Sang-yoon yelled from behind me, sobbing. "Don't be cocky... You were just lucky... The people I met were just as good as me. If I had only made a few good choices..."

Being below other people. Lee Sang-yoon couldn't tolerate that. He suffered a bitter taste in the dungeon and lost everything. "You are nothing. If you meet them... Even if you know in advance, there won't be much difference between you and me. The world is wide. There are so many geniuses that are better than you..."

"I know." Yes. I knew very well. The sense of inferiority and defeat that he was now feeling. It was something I'd felt since I was

a child. Why wasn't I born like them? Why was I lacking?

So... Life was a type of poker game. The ingredients were: Possessions and Talent. When everyone was born, his or her hand was drawn. It was sadly an area of luck.

Did I think there was no one better than me, just because they didn't show up right now? I'm sorry, but that wasn't the case. There were better people than me. But so what? Should I just give up due to what I was born with? Of course, I knew it very well. Even if I covered my face with an iron mask and bluffed, the probability of sweeping the pot was close to zero.

But should I forfeit early?

I had almost given up. Then an opportunity came. It was an opportunity to change the hand I was dealt into something better. I don't think that I'm the best explorer. I realized there would be someone who would beat the dungeon more efficiently than I could. Maybe even more. I might encounter them on the next floor.

But to me, it was natural. The experience so far was meaningful, and there was still a chance of succeeding. Even if I faced a person who was overwhelmingly stronger, I would bluff with an iron mask like I had done before.

I would do it until my winning percentage changed to 100%. Then, I would sweep away the pot on the table.

After completely breaking Lee Sang-yoon, I came down from the mountain. I headed to a certain spot in the library. I read the books I had borrowed over and over again.

When I woke up from concentrating, there was a text message.

Chapter 37 – Day 8, Special Gift

“I-I’m sorry I’m late.” She sat down in a hurry but Yoon Ji-hee’s face colour didn’t seem so bad.

“Your condition looks good.” I said as I ate the chicken ribs on the metal plate. Ah. Of course, I had to eat first. Maybe because she was 20 minutes late to the meeting, Yoon Ji-hee couldn’t meet my gaze.

“What happened was my grandfather...”

“Eat first.” I pointed to the metal plate. “Let’s finish the meal before talking.”

“Yes.” Like a young child being instructed by their parents, Yoon Ji-hee focused on eating straight away. She glanced at me occasionally, but didn’t speak until I had filled my stomach.

Once the plates were empty... “Yes. You mentioned it before. Ji-hee’s grandfather summoned everyone.”

Yoon Ji-hee nodded. As soon as he woke up in the morning, Chairman Yoon Sang-gyu summoned all his grandchildren. Two of the five people gathered there... Yoon Sang-ah and Yoon Sang-min had expressions like they didn’t know the situation.

“Your grandfather. What was his reaction?”

“There was a lot. He was very surprised. Grandfather was so shocked, something I’ve never seen before. He seemed a little angry and...” Of course, Yoon Ji-hee didn’t say that she killed them on the seventh floor. “The first thing he did was look at me.”

“He thought Ji-hee would be the first one eliminated.”

“Yes... Not just me, but he asked everyone to give a brief explanation of what happened on the seventh floor.” Yoon Sang-min and Yoon Sang-ah died while Yoon Ji-hee survived. For the people who couldn’t believe it, Yoon Ji-hee briefly explained the core of what had happened: she learned the language and took advantage of that to control the golems.

“Did he praise you?”

“... No. He was more focused on the fact that two people had been eliminated rather than...” Yoon Ji-hee had a grouchy expression on her face. She had probably been expecting a little bit of praise. She was ignored by her family, but she thought they would acknowledge her survival.

Although the failure of two grandchildren was tragic, it seemed like he still had no hope towards Yoon Ji-hee. It was just good luck that the knowledge she learned fit perfectly with the task. He didn’t think anything else. For me, it was a very good sign.

I wiped my hands and mouth with a napkin. Yoon Ji-hee raised her head. “People rely on their original impressions. It isn’t easy to change a negative evaluation. That bias is scary.”

“...”

I reached my hand over the table. My palm touched the back of Yoon Ji-hee’s hand, but there was nothing sexual about it.

“But I know. I was the one who saw the most benefits from what Ji-hee did. Frankly, my first impression of Ji-hee is completely different my impression of you now. I won’t protect Ji-hee. Ji-hee is a partner who maintains your own share, and you proved it perfectly on that floor.”

“...” Yoon Ji-hee remained silent. She blushed and shook her head.

No. She thought I was giving her too much praise. She deserved it, but didn’t seem to receive it from anyone other than me.

“Now. Tell me honestly.”

“... Huh?”

“Your grandfather’s surprised expression. Honestly, it didn’t feel that bad did it? That surprised expression when he saw Ji-hee’s face.”

“...” Yoon Ji-hee’s eyes moved upwards like she was recalling that scene. Then she nodded.

“How was it?”

“A little...”

“He was surprised because he underestimated Ji-hee. Isn’t that right?”

“Yes.”

“How about those two people? Yoon Sang-ah and Yoon Sang-min?” Yoon Ji-hee suddenly burst out laughing.

“I-I’m sorry.” Yoon Ji-hee covered her mouth with a hand. “W-When they first entered the room... Grandfather asked Sang-min oppa about what happened last night. Sang-min oppa’s confused face... He said he broke up with his girlfriend... Then Grandfather’s expression...”

The effect of the joke was decreased due to the stutter, but I laughed like it was really funny. I didn’t know what talent it was, but managing my expression seemed to be 10 times easier than before.

“It’s just the beginning. You’ll have many surprises for your grandfather in the future. Well, was it just your grandfather?” The family that ignored her. All the people around her. “Try to remember. Like your grandfather’s expression, don’t you want to make other people have that expression?”

“... Yes.”

“Then create it. I will help you. Just follow my orders like you did yesterday.” Cooperate only with me. It was to prevent her from going ‘astray’ in the future. All the rest, except for me, were marked as targets to be overcome. “Ji-hee can do it. You have the skills and qualifications.”

“... Yes.” Yoon Ji-hee nodded with an impressed expression. I released Yoon Ji-hee’s hand.

“Now, there is this.” Yoon Ji-hee spoke.

“Huh?”

Yoon Ji-hee pulled out a leather booklet. The 6th floor. It was the booklet with a handprint that the 2nd ranked boy dropped after dying. Despite my reading skills, I found it difficult to decipher, so I left it to Yoon Ji-hee. “I read it all. Then letters rose up... Look.”

She handed me a note. I read the words that Yoon Ji-hee had written.

[Seal: Gale Book. A book item. Rank C.]

[A book containing the basics of how to handle wind. The

scroll is imprinted with three magic spells, Wind Armour, Wind Bullet and ‘Flap of Wings’. Anybody can learn it by touching their palm to the page.]

[Magic power will be forcibly awakened for those without it.]

[Learning Difficulty Level: With a magic aptitude of 11 or less, a ‘schizophrenia’ effect will always be applied. The penalty can be reduced according to the value of the ‘willpower’ and ‘mental resistance’ abilities.]

Indeed. It was now understandable to a certain extent why the 2nd ranked boy had acted like that. I had no ‘magic aptitude’ in my stats. In other words, this meant 10 or less. None of the talents I gained so far had raised this figure. Unless I had a magic aptitude of 11 or more, I couldn’t help but suffer schizophrenia.

“I can’t use this.” It wouldn’t hurt to have such a strong wind but it had no meaning if I became schizophrenic. My willpower was 15 points. My mental resistance increased with Pain Tolerance, but I hadn’t received a message that it exceeded 10 points yet. The default value was quite low.

There was no need to take the risk. If I kept it, then one day I would be able to use it.

“What is it?” I asked.

Yoon Ji-hee was smiling quietly as I passed the note back. She seemed to be a little shy, like she was expecting something. Was there something else that I could praise her for?

“Like this...” Like a traditional choreographer, Yoon Ji-hee slowly moved her hands. At that moment...

“Eh? Is the door open?”

“Where is this wind blowing from?” In the restaurant with a closed door, a cool wind was blowing. I looked at Yoon Ji-hee with amazement.

“Did you learn it?”

“Yes, that... This is ‘Flap of Wings.’ I can arbitrarily adjust the wind intensity or range.” No, wasn’t there a penalty?

“Magic aptitude, I’ve had it for a while... I didn’t know until the sixth floor... I thought it was somewhat useless...”

“How much?”

“13 points.”

‘Please compliment me.’ Yoon Ji-hee smiled with such an expression. It was because I was so surprised that I stiffened for a moment.

[How come you only answer a phone call?]

“Should I have been replying?” As I spoke in a firm tone, Yang Su-jin was speechless for a moment. I had no intention of giving her the cold shoulder. Just...

Yang Su-jin: Oppa. What are you doing?

Yang Su-jin: I’m now in school ㅋㅋㅠㅠㅠㅠ

Yang Su-jin: Oppa.

Yang Su-jin: Oh.

Yang Su-jin: Pa!

Yang Su-jin: Pa!!

She bombarded me with Kakao talk messages every 30 minutes. (Kakao= Korean messaging app).

There was a limit to replying to each one. “Did you have nothing to do?”

[No, well... Call me if you don't have anything to do. Well...]

“I am exercising.” I replied bluntly. I was at a closed sports park in the evening. I had sneaked over the fence.

I hadn’t been able to confirm my physical specs in detail on the seventh floor. For example, how fast could I run at a certain speed? I checked the endurance of my body by seeing if it could withstand a barrage of Ravenous Wolf Fist. So far, I hadn’t become Superman.

I was able to reach the top of the basketball goal with a high jump. The car navigator application that I downloaded from the app store told me that I ran 58km, the distance of the park, in an hour. After the run, I did 20 minutes of shadow boxing. Finally, I sat down to rest, but I had recovered within three minutes.

“If you don’t have anything to report, then I’m going to sleep. Today there is no staircase, so I will rest well.”

[No, I have something to report!]

I didn’t think it was very important.

[I met a crazy woman.]

“What?”

[I was walking on the street when she spoke to me. She just suddenly asked if I went into the dungeon. She asked me that!]

I focused back on my cell phone. “Did you do anything that would make her say that?”

[I didn’t do anything. I was just on the way home from karaoke with my friends. She suddenly spoke to me in the middle of downtown.]

“So, what did you do?”

[That... In fact, I should’ve followed her but she was gone. I’m going home now on the subway and bus.]

“Where?”

20 minutes later, I met up with Yang Su-jin. It was a street without any people. I couldn’t sense anyone tailing her.

“This is a little exciting. It is the first time a man has walked me home.”

Instead of responding, I asked her. “What did that woman do?”

“Don’t you want to know what she said instead?”

“What did she say?” Yang Su-jin’s expression became strange at this question.

“I said she was a crazy woman... She laughed and wanted to cooperate with me. If we combined our strengths, then we could break through the dungeon without dying. She said this.”

“Bullsh*t.”

“It is bullsh*t. I felt goosebumps and refused as soon as I heard it.” How did she know that Yang Su-jin entered the dungeon? Did she have the ability to detect a person? Maybe it wasn’t the ability to pick out who entered the dungeon, but rather, it identified the abilities of a person? “Then... It became really weird.”

“Hrm?”

“Nobody needs to be hurt. I tried to stop her talking such nonsense but... It was only for a moment, but it didn’t sound like bullsh*t.”

“Did you get hypnotized?”

“Eh?! I really don’t know! Then what if I did?” I just threw out the word but Yang Su-jin had an anxious expression on her face. “I don’t know if she looks bad, but it was strange. Her voice was very good. It was like... Like a mother, I felt that sense of peace? Honestly, if it wasn’t for Oppa then I might have followed her.”

Yang Su-jin shook as she spoke. “If it was hypnosis then a little jolt will solve it right? Can you go into an alley and beat me up?”

“... Don’t say such strange things.” If somebody heard then it would be a big deal. Once I saw Yang Su-jin’s response, a possibility other than hypnosis emerged.

“She might have developed a persuasion related talent.” I had changed people’s reactions and even intimidated Lee Sang-yoon today, despite having no evidence.

I leaned more towards physical abilities, but what if I was the opposite? It wouldn’t be impossible to manipulate people with words. “But even so, it should feel quite bad.”

“Yes... It really was weird. If they survive by joining forces, they might be able to turn this reality into a better place... It would be like Jesus.”

“... Certainly.” It seemed stupid at first glance. In a world like this, people were more likely to live in a harsh manner. But that woman caused even Yang Su-jin, who wasn’t a fool, to shake for a moment. She had enough eloquence to make a person change their minds. Or maybe she spoke sincerely... If so, she was a rare human being these days.

After leaving Yang Su-jin, I returned home and showered. Speaking of which, it had been seven days since I lay in my bed. While falling into the comfortable drowsiness, I felt a slight unrest. Was it due to the woman that Yang Su-jin met?

A woman with a great sense of purpose, who was gathering people to cooperate and change this reality. If she really existed, she was several times more dangerous than a liar who was a hypocrite. Either way, she was completely incompatible with me.

At least, inside the dungeon.

Well... It was unlikely she existed. There was 'no such thing' in reality.

I fell asleep.

It was a very sweet sleep.

Chapter 38 – Day 11, Use

It was the morning of the 11th day when the letters popped up. I had just woken up after a comfortable night's sleep.

[Today at midnight. The dungeon will open.]

Those letters popped up. Well, I felt like this had been coming.

"Now." I lightly hit each cheek. I would live diligently today. The exams were all over. Even so, I was waiting for the final exams of the second semester.

I turned on the computer. There was a message from Ha Jae-hak in my messenger. Even though it happened three days ago, he had contacted me first and we frequently kept in touch.

Yesterday, I was introduced to some developers and the president of a start-up. All of them were in their late 20's and were well known people in the current industry. I shared a few words with them and there was some outsourcing for a fairly high price.

Apart from the profit, it was a chance to work deeply with developers and learn from them! This was probably my sunbae's gift. No, it was a bribe. He wanted to show me the full taste of his contacts.

Well, even so, I wouldn't be moved. I would just gratefully accept the things he gave me.

[Good morning. Hee-chul.]

"Yep." There was a video call meeting about the system and then I started to work on it. Their expectations towards me weren't high, so it felt more like they were using me as an assistant but...

[Ohu. Hee-chul is brighter than I thought. This isn't the image from yesterday.]

"Is that so?"

[You can just jump into the industry without needing to go to school. You will quickly adapt. Originally, bright people don't finish school.]

"It's because I'm afraid."

[Huhu. If I don't know anything, then I will contact you immediately. Anyway, I am bored because I am working at home.]

It was approximately 3 p.m. when I received a phone call in the middle of working. I checked the caller and immediately exited my apartment. Lee Sang-yoon was standing in front of my building.

"I asked for information, not for you to come here."

“...” There was frustration and desperation on his rotten face.

I reached out. “If you don’t have anything to give me then get lost.”

A car was parked behind Lee Sang-yoon. I didn’t know much about cars, but I knew that it was a very expensive car that wasn’t commonly seen on these streets. It wasn’t a car that Lee Sang-yoon would come in.

“Don’t worry. I’ll end this quickly.”

I heard a voice as the car door opened.

“Sang-yoon isn’t good, but he did do a lot for us.” The first one who stepped down was a person dressed like a wannabe hip-hop singer. He approached Lee Sang-yoon and placed an arm around his shoulder.

Lee Sang-yoon shivered.

“Isn’t that right, Sang-yoon? It doesn’t matter how scared you are. You won’t try to sell information on your colleagues.”

“...” Two more people emerged from the backseat. One male had a hairstyle using pomade and wore horn-rimmed glasses. The other person had a big physique, like a western male, and wore a t-

shirt with the name of a foreign university.

It was the first time I had seen them, but it wasn't hard to guess who they were. They were the trio that Lee Sang-yoon tried to use only to fail.

"This time I met him directly, but his spirit wasn't in a proper state. I could tell that something was wrong. So we investigated the truth. You asked him to give you information about us?"

"I did."

"You did? Hah, truly. You're a scary one."

As the hip-hop person looked surprised, the macho man opened his mouth. His eyes were examining my building. "You live simply. Do you go to the same university as Lee Sang-yoon?"

"Yes."

The man with horn-rimmed glasses spoke in response to the macho man's question. "Kim Hee-chul. 23 years old. Lives at 42-3, Hyunandong, Seongtan-si, Gyeonggi-do. Rents a room in an 18 pyeong house. His father is self-employed. His mother is a housewife."

"Kya. We're not stalkers. Isn't that right?" Hip-hop finished with an exclamation. When looking at the group of three, I felt like I was seeing cogs turning together.

Then Glasses opened his mouth again. “Lee Sang-yoon will be ‘out’ right at midnight today. This is a self-inflicted result. It is for trying to leak information.”

Hip-hop giggled and put strength into his arm, which was wrapped around Lee Sang-yoon’s neck. Lee Sang-yoon frowned like he was in pain. “I feel this is enough, but we came to warn you.”

“Is there still more to the warning?”

“Of course.” Glasses nodded. “On the 8th floor, there is a high probability that we will encounter each other.”

What did that mean?

“I did a simple survey on the sixth and seventh floors. The area of the fifth floor you stayed in is V9? It’s a place where all the explorers of your neighbourhood gathered. We were in V11.” Glasses said.

They had reached a guess after dealing with the people on the sixth and seventh floors. On the sixth and seventh floors, there were people from V9, V10 and V11.

“It seems like people were mixed up on the sixth floor, but in fact, it is just the people from those three areas that were mixed up. It was the same on the seventh floor. In the end, we are in close

proximity and will likely encounter each other.”

There was a possibility that the number of people were reduced after the sixth and seventh floors. Thus, chances were high that the people from the three areas, who cleared the seventh floor, would meet up on the same eighth floor.

“You have until then to give an answer.” This time, it was Macho who spoke in a heavy voice.

These scum, had they come up with the script in advance?

“You will replace the position of Lee Sang-yoon, or you’ll end up like him. We know who you are. We can intervene in your reality. Remember this.”

“...” I scratched my head. Were they finished?

“He is completely stiff.”

Hip-hop laughed as he used his grip on Lee Sang-yoon’s neck to turn him around. At that moment, I said to his back.

“Kim Su-han. 24 years old. On a leave of absence from G University. Your father is the president of a confectionery company and your mother is the famous daughter of a rich family in the Gyeonggi-do area. You have two older sisters. One is married, then divorced, and the other is single. Currently living apart from your family in XX-dong.”

“... What?”

This time, I turned towards Glasses. “Hwang Jong-gyu. 25 years old. Graduated from S University. Your father is a lawyer and you are currently enrolled at the same law school. Your mother is a soldier. You are the only son. Due to your stingy father, the house you live in is a common apartment.”

Finally, Macho was last. “Kwak Cheol-jin. You didn’t want to do anything annoying and became a famous football player in Pasadena. You’re currently working at your father’s company.”

My mouth dried up from talking too much. Hip-hop turned back towards me with wide eyes.

“What, do you think you were the only ones who could find out information?” I asked. Surprisingly, Yoon Ji-hee worked quite well. Her mother had ties with some companies. I didn’t know how a chaebol got their information, but she accomplished a remarkable achievement only three days after I met Lee Sang-yoon.

“I haven’t memorized all of it, but I have a bunch of papers with things written on them. I can show them to you if you want.” I took a step forward.

“...!” Hip-hop removed his arm from Lee Sang-yoon and had a serious expression on his face. It didn’t matter if they believed me or not. I was done with that part. I approached the front of the car

that Hip-hop drove.

“Well, okay. You did a background check on us. But then what?”

“My life, will you be able to intervene in it now?” I asked.

“Why? Does it sound like a joke?” Macho asked with folded arms.

“Yes.” I nodded and...

Bakak.

I pulled off the emblem on the front of the car.

“You crazy bastard!” Hip-hop instantly rushed over to me.

I didn’t raise a fist. I opened both arms and welcomed him. It was like I was calling for him to hit me.

“...Ugh.”

“Why?” Hip-hop didn’t end up punching me.

“Try it. I already did one thing to you guys already.” I rolled the emblem around in my hands. The people controlling Lee Sang-yoon weren’t fools. They couldn’t punch a person in broad daylight, or use an ability.

I looked back at Glasses and Macho. “Right now, you’re so afraid of getting involved with the police that you can’t even punch me. Can you really intervene in my life?”

Of course, I also couldn’t hit these guys. But they had said it first. They would ruin my life. It was like putting a poisonous pill among prescriptions. The other party that received the poison would desperately try to fight back. If they wanted to declare that they would ruin somebody’s life, they had to be prepared to play the game as well.

Sometimes, a socially weak person would be able to over a strong person with desperation. But that was different. These people had poured a lot of oil on the fire. They were going against me.

“Try it.”

“We...”

“I wonder what you would try to do? Perhaps ruin my father’s store? Will you be responsible for causing a deficit? Or maybe create a big debt like seen in dramas?”

Kwajik!

I put strength into the hand holding the emblem. The cool brand logo became dull aluminum foil in the blink of an eye. I threw it at Glasses. It hit him in the chest and gently fell to the ground.

“If your house truly has that much power, then give it a try. But I will also intervene in your lives in my own way. Yes?”

“...”

Of course, this could just be acting but what if it really was going to happen? They seemed to realize the answer. Thus, they didn't say anything. It wasn't just Hip-hop, but Glasses and Macho as well. They tried to intimidate me, only to receive a declaration of war that made it difficult to follow through.

Bakak.

I pulled off one of the side mirrors of the car as well. I heard the sound of grinding teeth coming from the mouth of Hip-hop, who seemed to be the owner of the car. But he looked at Glasses instead of attacking me.

“What you are doing now is obviously vandalism. You also have documents containing our personal information...”

“You can sue me.” I nodded, but then said some additional words.

“But you know, if charges are brought against me... I will understand that you want to ruin my life and take it as a declaration of war.”

“What...?”

“Then I will start.”

Kwajik!

“I will also intervene in your lives.” The completely flattened mirror fell to the ground. “Well. That’s okay. It’s like you said.” In a while, we would meet up in the dungeon.

“I will make sure that all of you can’t even remember this event. Both the good and bad memories. I will be relieved of my guilty conscience, so isn’t it a win-win?”

I waved my hand and headed back to the entrance of my building. I would finish off these people in the dungeon.

“... I will look for you inside.” Glasses spat out a final remark.

I said goodbye to Lee Sang-yoon who was almost crammed in the back seat. Maybe they would keep him with them until midnight in order to prevent any information from leaking. “The worst thing you are worried about isn’t going to happen.”

“...”

I didn’t have any evidence. I didn’t know how Lee Sang-yoon interpreted it, but his eyes looked a bit shaken as the door closed.

30 minutes until midnight. I finished my preparations to enter the dungeon.

I raised my hand to my mouth as I thought about the last three days. It would be a lie to say I wasn't amused. I was able to enjoy a much different world than before. The previous days had seemed like a dream.

... I was a little afraid. The person who gave us three days of rest was very familiar with humans. After not entering the dungeon for a few days, I felt that fear. If I was to die in the dungeon, all this effort to change myself would be a waste. I didn't want that to happen.

No matter what happened...

“...!”

My phone rang. The number was one that I saw for the first time, but I knew who the caller was.

“Yes.”

[Yes... What...?]

As I picked up the phone, Lee Sang-yoon's was panting on the other end. He seemed to be in pain. "Did you run away?"

[T-That, although... It doesn't matter.]

It was now 25 minutes to midnight. Even if he held on in reality, Lee Sang-yoon was destined to be out in the dungeon.

[I... I hate you.]

"I know."

[But... You're the only one. That seems to be the case. So... I'm talking to you.]

What of it? He was talking because he was aware of the possibility of all this happening. Although he hated me, his hostility towards those three people was greater, so he gave me information about them.

In the end, I was used to get revenge. While inwardly thinking this...

I listened to Lee Sang-yoon's words.

[8th floor entry.]

Chapter 39 – Day 11, 8th Floor Forest

The first thing I saw was the sky, then Yang Su-jin and Yoon Ji-hee.

“Hello... Ack?!” Yang Su-jin smiled widely before finally noticing. We were all floating in the air. A shiny bubble was surrounding each of us.

Instead of being shocked, I looked around as much as possible. The space itself seemed similar to Talia. However, the sun was nowhere to be found. Only the bubbles surrounding us and the lights shining from the ground could be seen.

I figured we were approximately 50 meters from the ground?

“Don’t panic, and look over there.” Yang Su-jin and Yoon Ji-hee looked in the direction that I indicated. There were dozens of sparkling bubbles at the same height as us. I couldn’t see inside because of the distance, but there were definitely people inside it.

“We’re probably going to fall.”

“Yes?!”

“...” Yang Su-jin’s eyes widened at my words, while Yoon Ji-hee didn’t say anything.

We weren't simply heading downwards. If not, they wouldn't need to put us in the sky like this. "Do you remember the ticket I gave you? Tear it if there is an urgent situati..."

Paang.

I heard the scream of a woman. The fall took place in an instant. As the dizzying view moved around me,

Kung.

There was a heavy thud. I was rolling across the ground. I got up and looked around.

[Evella. Type: Plant Rank D.]

[A leafless plant found in Evella Forest, also called the 'barren forest.' It is only made up of stems and roots, not leaves. Unless there is a fire, removing this plant is very difficult. Since it grows faster than the burning rate, the creatures and inhabitants of Evella Forest can't resist them. They can only live in the spaces allowed by this plant.]

Indeed, these plants were everywhere, like a white fence. Not only was it around me, but the plants were also above me. There was only a hole left from the bubble that had surrounded me.

That hole was restored in almost seconds. There were two paths to my left and right. This was the space that ‘Evella’ allowed. I tried disobeying. I grabbed a Evella vine from among the wall-like fence and firmly pushed.

“Um...”

There was overwhelming pressure despite my muscle strength being 20 points. I could easily break it with my body, but it was instantly restored. I didn’t know if the wall of vines was thin or not. It was unreasonable to go through the wall without knowing how thick it was.

Due to the fact that it was a forest without light, the limited field of view from the previous floors was back again. In the end, I could only explore the maze instead of going through the wall.

I started walking down a path. Rather than silencing my footsteps, I focused on exploring as quickly as possible. As I thought, I soon met a resident.

Swik.

There was the sound of metal rubbing against something. I stopped walking and raised my head. Surprise appeared on the face of the male hanging above me.

“Geik!”

The man fell from above. I took a step back and widened the distance. I honestly thought it was a goblin or something. I had seen the forest from the air. I thought that the bright lights among the vines came from a village of intelligent creatures, but he was a human.

“Moget.” His skin color was light brown. At first glance, he looked like a mixture of an Asian and a western person. However, his nose was sharp like an arrow. His hair color was also gray, a natural color that didn’t exist in my world.

“Why? I. Attack. Won’t.” I made my pronunciation of Tellan as clear as possible.

“Hah?” The other person looked surprised. Then he said, “Give me Moget.”

[The level of a talent has risen.]

[Tellan (Conversation). Lv 2. Related abilities have increased.]

“Moget? What is that?” The person opened his mouth like he was going to explain, but then his eyes narrowed and he adjusted the daggers in both hands, like I was an enemy. Once I was killed, he could collect the items without any questions.

A corpse couldn’t converse. The man moved immediately.

Fast!

Of course, it wasn't that hard to avoid.

Tak.

I grabbed his wrist and lightly pulled, as I immediately noticed that appearances were deceiving. This guy looked like an ordinary teenage boy. However, the impression of strength I received from grabbing his wrists far surpassed that of Lee Sang-yoon.

Was it the difference between species? Even though they looked similar, their physical abilities might be far superior to that of modern human beings. I put strength into the hands holding his wrist. It was very light.

“...!!” His hands dropped the two daggers and I blocked the scream that tried to emerge.

“Hey. Tellan.” I didn’t know what else to call him. “I am stronger than you. If you raise your voice then your neck will be broken. I hope you understand. Speak slowly. Evenly.”

As I pulled my hand away from his mouth, the boy’s frightened eyes turned to me.

“Our warriors will catch you soon.” Unlike his bold words, his

voice was as small as an ant. It was cute.

I asked again. “What is Moget?”

“T-The invitation of the gods...”

“Describe the function of it.”

“If I rip it, I can go to the sanctuary.”

Ah. I took out a ticket from my inventory. “Is this what you are referring to?”

“Moget.” The boy’s eyes shone like it was a treasure. Was it to buy goods they couldn’t get from here? The daggers that the boy dropped and the clothes he wore seemed quite shabby. Although they seemed to be natives of the forest, the shabby nature showed how long they had been passed on.

“Do you have money?”

“... Money?”

“It is required to buy things there.” The boy didn’t seem to understand.

“We offer a tribute... The Gasava fruit that is carefully

prepared..."

"Tribute?"

"Dear God, please forgive the incompetence of our ancestors. Please help us leave here and return to the civilization of our ancestors. We pray."

"There are no stairways here? They would go down."

"We... We are different from you. We can't cross the boundary. We were exiled here." In other words, they couldn't get out of this forest, so they stole the tickets from incoming explorers to pray to the statue.

Well, I knew very well that the prayer had no effect. That's why they were still here. There was one thing though.

They knew about the concept of tickets and explorers in advance. Were there explorers before this? Is it not just our world? I looked at the boy to ask another question.

At that time, a few sentences emerged in the air.

"..." I read the message twice. It took some time before I understood the meaning. Indeed. It wasn't entirely useless.

"Ah." The boy's eyes widened as he looked behind me. There was

an expression of relief on his face. I looked back and saw four Tellans.

“Father!” The boy cried out to one of the four men. All of them looked much stronger than the boy. They were big and holding sharp weapons. They determined that I was an enemy just by looking.

Well, my questions were already roughly resolved just from the previous message that I popped up in the air. If one survived, I could kill them to get their talents. Were they treating me like a monster?

The Tellans rushed towards me.

I found a village five hours later. I was going to tear the ticket and go to the fifth floor after eight hours. Even if Yang Su-jin and Yoon Ji-hee tore their tickets, they would still be there for 12 hours.

There were Tellan villages all over the forest. That was the information I had squeezed from them. There were several villages that guarded the stairs leading down to different exits. They were stairs that the Tellans couldn’t go down.

“Cough.” As I breathed in smoke, I looked around the village that was already in shambles. It was approximately the size of a primary school playground. There had been dozens of Tellans

living here. But now, all of them were dead and uninvited guests were resting in the village.

“Who is this? I really ran into you here.” The one in charge was Hip-hop. There were at least 10 people around him. I looked around, but didn’t see Glasses or Macho.

“It looks like you’re alone. Were you lost in the forest?” He spoke casually, but his party was already spreading out, like he had given them unspoken directions. I saw one person block the road into the village behind me.

I looked at Hip-hop and said. “I discovered the path a few minutes ago and followed it. I’m alone.”

Hip-hop laughed with satisfaction at my words. The shoes he was wearing seemed to be unusual.

Lee Sang-yoon said it was a ‘B rank’ equipment. The place they reached on the 7th floor was a ‘factory.’ Similar to me, instead of fighting the guards of the factory, they chose a smarter way.

They fixed the facilities of the factory using the Tellan language and received three B rank items as compensation. Right now, I only had C and D rank equipment.

Of course, they were weapons, but I couldn’t ignore the skills of the people handling them. Even if they had the mysterious ability to shoot fire or freeze an opponent, I could get that much

destructive power from other weapons.

But they were different. They had overwhelming firepower and talents. Lee Sang-yoon had said this.

“I will give you a chance to change your mind. How about it?” As Hip-hop stepped forward, his shoes started to glow. They were shoes that allowed for incredibly fast movement. Maybe it was the power of the shoes that allowed him to take over this village.

As proof, there was dust on some of the party members, while Hip-hop showed only a little bit of fatigue. He made a triumphant expression. “I’m not an intolerant person. Some of the ones here only joined me on this floor. Do you see this pretty girl here? I saved her directly.”

Hip-hop winked at the girl next to him.

“Oppa is really cool.” The girl laughed like she was shy. I wasn’t sure if that face was pretty or not.

“Lee Sang-yoon, that jerk was too self-conscious. He makes me want to beat him up even when he is quiet.”

“I feel the same way.”

“Well, I don’t want to hit you. But you did do something to my car. Even if you surrender, I have to pay that back.” Of course, I wasn’t fool enough to surrender and Hip-hop also knew that. He

was waiting for me to say ‘no’ so he could strike.

I opened my mouth. “Have you ever read Romance of the Three Kingdoms?”

“... What?” The look on his face said he hadn’t read it.

“Before he died, Zhuge Liang handed something in his pocket to Yang.”

“What are you talking about?”

“Zhuge Liang believed that the guy called Wei Yan would betray him. So before he died, Zhuge Liang handed a pouch over to Yang. Yang opened the pouch. There was a piece of paper with writing on it.”

“Who will kill me? If Wei Yan shouts this message three times. I will hand over all military rights to Wei Yan. Yang delivered the message to Wei Yan, who smiled and shouted it three times.”

“Crazy bastard.” Hip-hop thought I was talking nonsense to buy some time and lowered his upper body.

“You don’t know what I mean, but you should at least look behind you.”

“That...!” Someone who read Romance of the Three Kingdoms

called out to Hip-hop, but it was too late.

Bam!

The body of Hip-hop, who was about to move, shook for a moment. Hip-hop stared blankly at the broken glass bottle that hit him and the liquid that soaked his head.

“I will kill you.’ Was that it?” The girl recited the line in the novel and shrugged as she turned towards me. “People should study these days. There are no kids reading Romance of the Three Kingdoms anymore.”

“You?”

“I read it whenever I am bored.” As I looked at Yang Su-jin, blood poured from Hip-hop’s body.

Chapter 40 – Day 11, 8th Floor 1/3

Hip-hop wasn't hit hard.

"This fuc...!!" A spin kick. There was a blue flash as Hip-hop's right leg left the ground and hit Yang Su-jin's abdomen. With a loud sound like a hammer banging into something, Yang Su-jin flew back two to three metres. What was this? Hip-hop grinned despite the pained expression.

"It hurts." He frowned as he glanced at Yang Su-jin who had flown away to the left. Yang Su-jin had a obvious hole in her abdomen.

"So why didn't you read Romance of the Three Kingdoms?" I asked.

"...Kuk..." Blood started emerging from Hip-hop's ears and eyes as he glared at Yang Su-jin and started dying. Actually, I had only read the manhwa of the Three Kingdoms, but I didn't need to tell him that.

I would feed Hip-hop to Yang Su-jin. I looked at the rest of the group. There were a total of 13 people.

"Heok..." Despite their leader Hip-hop being on the verge of death, they had the numerical advantage. Some of them were already running away. There were seven entrances into the village. If they spread out, then it was impossible for me to catch them all. I wasn't greedy and chased after the one with the best movements.

[Running. Lvl 4. 23/800]

After the massive killing on the seventh floor, I received Running Lvl 4. It was a talent that I didn't have before. When I tested the performance of my body on the seventh floor, it wasn't like this. The experience only went up when pursuing someone.

“Hiik!” I grabbed the collar of the man and he extended a fist. There was a flash from the ring on the man's hand. Lightning hit my body. At that moment, my body stiffened as an electric current spread throughout my body. The man smile of satisfaction but...

Pak.

My elbow struck the man's head. His body collapsed and I removed the ring. The ring emitted an electric current with the power to stun an adult male. Continuous exposure would lead to shock. That was the description attached to the ring.

But in the end, it was just a D rank item.

[Current Balance: 622/625]

It was the right answer to buy the Tellan book instead of the fire

ring on the fourth floor. If the man's abilities were the same as mine, then this ring would surely be a considerable advantage. However, it couldn't cover the gap caused by overwhelming specs.

I ignored the rest of the 12 people running away and looked at Yang Su-jin who was crying out.

"Yah! My level really climbed a lot!" Yang Su-jin was delighted as she peeled the shoes off Hip-hop's body.

"It climbed a lot?"

"Yes, there wasn't much else. He was really good at Tellan. My reading is at level six and conversation is level three! This is a complete meal!"

I also heard it from Lee Sang-yoon. I picked up the book about Tellan that had fallen from Hip-hop's body. Lee Sang-yoon said that there was a subtle battle between the other three men. The three of them had their own specialties that kept the other in check.

Hip-hop's specialty was language. As could be seen by the level rise, he was very proud of his aptitude and used this as a weapon against the other two. In other words, the other two were illiterate. They wouldn't be able to speak Tellan unless they had other books and studied from them.

"Eh... But isn't that a disadvantage on this floor?" Yang Su-jin

asked as she handed me the shoes.

She explained. “Originally he tried to talk to the residents. At first.”

After overpowering the Tellans, Hip-hop had given a few tickets to the thrilled Tellans. He was quite smart. He would know from previous experience that violence wasn’t the only answer. The Tellans were amiable after Hip-hop gave them a few tickets and revealed a lot of information.

“He pretended to be nice to get some answers...” Except for the villages, there was one more space in the forest that the Evella allowed. It was a space greater than all the villages combined and the only fertile land in the forest.

There, the Tellans grew something called ‘Kasava.’ It was the only thing that they ate in this forest.

I kicked a pile of burnt rubble. Not long after, plants similar to sweet potatoes poured out. I peeled the skin and bit one.

“Ah, me too! I’ll eat it as well!” Yang Su-jin cried out.

I chewed on a Kasava.

Yang Su-jin looked at the food like it was trash after eating it. “The taste is really dirty! How do they live on this sort of food?”

However, the nutrients in it were phenomenal. Except for the monsters that lived among the bushes, there was no imbalance in the Tellans that ate it. They used the fertile soil to grow this miracle plant.

“There is a sacred altar.”

“Eh? Oppa knows as well?”

“I don’t know exactly what it is.”

“I’m the same. The people here don’t seem to know exactly what it is.”

The Tellans I encountered had also given me that information. In fact, the Tellans had no choice. If they wanted to find out what it was, they would have to dig out the field that was their livelihood. It was impossible even if they had a lot of food stored up.

Of course, it also wasn’t known to the explorers. In any case, it was clear that the sacred altar was the key to clearing this floor. In order to do that, we had to get rid of the method keeping the Tellans alive. Therefore, Hip-hop chose to kill all of the Tellans here. He used the shoes.

[Falen Boots – 204th Limited Edition. Equipment item. Rank B]

[Limited edition model boots created by the professional manufacturing studio, Falen. It boasts stability and a semi-permanent magic power source that makes it different from conventional booster boots. Due to the complexity of the creation process, only a few pairs were manufactured and it didn't reach the stage of mass production. These are only the boots, not the whole body equipment.]

[Gives an addition four points of 'muscle strength' to the wearer. For those with a default muscle strength of '20' or higher, it will only increase by two.]

[Increases agility by three points.]

[The electric current generated will be in proportion to the kicking impact.]

[Prevents damage to the joints/muscles in the area worn.]

The numbers were quite big. The kick that hit Yang Su-jin boasted tremendous power. The smell of barbecued meat was due to the electricity.

"Isn't this a surprisingly nice design? It suits Oppa very well." I didn't say anything as I put the boots on. It resembled roller-blades with small wheels. I loosened the locking mechanism as much as possible and put my foot in.

“...”

“...”

It didn't fit. It was too small.

“Um... Uh... Well, your feet are a little longer.”

“... You wear it.” Although it was a bit big for her, it wasn't a big inconvenience once Yang Su-jin tightened the locks. She jumped higher than usual and shrieked with delight.

“This is so cool!”

“I guess so.”

With Yang Su-jin behind me, I explored the ruins. There might be one person whose breath wasn't completely stopped. Not long after, I heard little whimpers from a half-collapsed cabin. I kicked the rubble aside to see a dying man and a girl guarding him.

“F-Father...” The Tellan girl trembled as she saw me and embraced the man next to her. The man had already lost a lot of blood and only looked at me with blurry eyes.

“Eh... I'll finish it. Oppa?” Yang Su-jin asked from behind me.

I looked at her and she shrugged before speaking. “Um... This isn’t... I thought about it. There isn’t anything to gain from killing them. I mean, at least let them die quietly...”

“I didn’t say that there was nothing to gain.” I could practice my Punching, Grappling or Torture. If I was vicious enough, then I could eat them.

I approached the girl. Then I spoke in Tellan. “If you say ‘Yes’ then you will be able to live.”

“I will do it!” The girl screamed and Yang Su-jin belatedly made a noise from behind me.

“Eh?” Yang Su-jin was moaning stupidly. I turned my head. Her expression looked just as stupid as her face.

“Leave it. This is good enough.”

“Yep.” Yang Su-jin replied positively with her hands behind her back.

I sighed as I looked at the words above the heads of the girl and man. The words were slightly different for each person. I looked at the ones above the girl’s head.

[Waruda. Tellan. Sex-Female, 15 years old. Health Status – Good.]

[Citizenship can be granted with the command ‘Grant Citizenship.’]

[Citizenship can be removed with the command ‘Remove Citizenship.’]

[In the case of Tellans who have been granted citizenship, the coordinates of the territory belonging to the monarch will be communicated. They can move through the stairs to the corresponding area.]

The girl and man shivered as I granted citizenship to them. The words about whether to accept the citizenship or not appeared before them. The man seemed to understand the meaning. The girl agreed along with her father.

['Waruda' has become your citizen.]

['Kagon' has become your citizen.]

I took their hands and pulled them up. Unlike the man who completely entrusted himself to me, the frightened girl stumbled.

“Don’t worry, Waruda.” I whispered.

“...!” The girl calmed down at my words.

I headed for the stairs in the centre of the village. As soon as the two people were placed on the stairs, they disappeared.

“That, did they go to Talia? The seventh floor?”

“Yes.” The ones who were there first would heal the man.

I had wondered when I first encountered the Tellans. Were they monsters of the dungeon? Or were they prey to be killed in order to eat their talents? None of that. They were a type of resource. I could take advantage of this floor.

“Those sent through the stairs didn’t come back. It is probably a one-way path.”

Shortly after I had noticed the message, I offered a deal to the Tellans. Granting them citizenship didn’t mean they were puppets who would follow my words. But they wanted to get out of here. I told them the story of the City of the Sun, and they were totally captivated as some people disappeared through the stairs.

“There will be room in Talia for them to grow the Kasava. I told them I would grant them citizenship if they followed my instructions.”

After sending away some useless seniors for free, it was quite spectacular as village after village fell to their knees before me. This was the solution to the eighth floor.

Maybe the Glasses, Macho and Hip-hop trio also had something similar to citizenship. Their stage on the seventh floor was a huge factory. No, maybe it was an industrial city?

But at the start, the three of them were scattered. Hip-hop might know the language but he obviously didn't have the right to grant citizenship. If not, there was no way he would make the village like this.

“Walk around the ruin and see if there is anyone else remaining.”

“Yes!”

I started looking through the ruins with Yang Su-jin for Tellans who were in a critical state. It might have been a waste of time. The Tellans who couldn't go to Talia were no use to me. But I had nothing to do as I waited.

Wajik!

There was a furious sound as a punch was thrown and a hole was created in the Evella vine. Before the vines could recover again,

Hwang Jong-gyu moved through them. Hwang Jong-gyu, who was also known as Glasses, looked at the party following him.

Kwak Cheol-jin. Macho was at the very rear. ‘That gorilla bastard.’ Even in the midst of moving quickly, he was looking out for himself.

But in the end, when it came to fighting, he was needed to kill the guy who took Hip-hop’s talent. Glasses clenched his teeth. Somehow he had to reclaim Hip-hop’s talent and the shoes that he was wearing.

The seventh floor. Factory City of Falen. The rewards were distributed to all three of them to reflect their struggle when clearing the city. Due to Glasses having the weakest combat power, he received the magic armour that wrapped around his whole body.

Hip-hop was the speaker and he claimed the shoes to aid in his evasion. The most powerful of the three, Macho, had to be satisfied with having the authority of the ‘mayor’ and could control the facilities of the factory city.

‘It isn’t just that.’ It was strange that Macho had no complaints despite receiving the most useless reward on the seventh floor. There was clearly a hidden feature. So despite the fact that Glasses joined Macho early, he couldn’t attack him first.

Glasses kept watching and it was clear that there was something more. In the village they found, Macho had watched the

indigenous people they oppressed with something like anticipation.

The result was really eccentric. Macho said something in the other language and the indigenous people suddenly disappeared down the stairs. They didn't come back again. Glasses asked what had happened, but Macho just sent him a stern look. He couldn't ask the natives. Hip-hop wasn't here.

Still, Glasses believed that his armour would protect him from Macho. Then they encountered a party member who was breathing heavily. He announced the death of Hip-hop. It was at the hands of a man and woman.

The party started running. No matter what, Glasses had to reclaim Hip-hop's talent. The person who regained it would become the dominant one between the two.

Wajik!

The armored fist crushed the wall of vines. Glasses breathed out as he looked at the sight before him. A smashed village. Hip-hop's body covered with blood.

“That was faster than I thought.”

“...!”

On the other side of the village, Hee-chul grinned at Glasses,

Macho and their group.

“It was worth leaving 12 people alive.” Hee-chul raised both palms to the sky. “Didn’t I say it? I would see you inside the dungeon.”

With an expression of relaxation and humour that was different from when they saw him in reality, Hee-chul beckoned with both hands.

“Come.”

Chapter 41 – Day 11, 8th Floor Renewal

Glasses and Macho were surprised as they saw me. They were looking at my feet. It wasn't there. Hip-hop's boots couldn't be seen. "Are my feet really the most important thing?"

"...!"

"...!"

I raised my index finger and knocked twice on my temple. "Here. The thing you want is in here. I studied really hard." Then I walked backwards. Right behind me was one of the entrances to the village. If they didn't chase after me, then I would disappear into the forest.

It was clearly a lure. I didn't want to fight against many people at once, so I would defeat them one by one in the forest. They had no choice. Whether I ate Hip-hop or not, they knew that I was strong. It was necessary to eat me in order to gain dominance over each other.

Pak!

Glasses was the first to rush towards me. Macho followed behind him. The two of them couldn't catch up with me due to my excellent stats, so the distance between us started to widen slightly.

I entered the road leading into the forest and waited at the first curve. I wasn't thinking about attacking here. It wasn't only a few steps from the entrance but it didn't make sense to drag them into the forest to defeat them one by one. I could hear Glasses and Macho step into the forest. The footsteps were a few seconds apart.

"W-What the?" Screams were heard just after the two of them left the village. Yang Su-jin, who was lurking near the entrance to the ruins, struck the remaining people. Their screams were the signal, so I rounded the corner to attack.

Glasses and Macho were looking back towards the village where the turmoil was taking place. Macho was in the rear. Glasses was ahead of him.

"This...!" Glasses discovered me and raised his guard. A few steps behind, Macho was getting ready to throw the iron ball in his hand. Did he think there was no way to attack him thanks to the on guard Glasses in front of him?

That wasn't the case. I turned using my right leg. In addition, I thrust forward with the cylinder in my right hand that I had taken out from my inventory. It was just like what Lee Sang-yoon had done a few days ago.

[Moray Spear. Equipment item. Rank D.]

[The total length is 5.5m, but once all the parts are folded, it becomes a thin cylindrical shape that is 25cm. Once a stabbing

posture is used, it will receive the force and the folded part will instantly unfold. The instantaneous change in length can surprise an opponent, but it needs more power and accuracy than normal spears.]

[The power will increase in proportion to the user's strength, posture and timing.]

[If the spear strikes something when the unfolding isn't complete then the power will decrease.]

There was a sharp sound. The spear flew much faster than when Lee Sang-yoon, the original owner, used it. Once again, C and D rank weapons weren't that good. But it wasn't bad. It depended on the user's skill as well.

Puk.

There was an elastic texture as the pole extended several metres. The spear was reduced to its original size after completely penetrating Macho's neck.

Chak.

There was a noise as the spear formed a cylinder again.

Buuuong.

The sound of Glasses' fist was heard at almost the same time. As I leaned back and avoided the fist, I took out a vial with one of my hands. It hit Glasses exactly. I stepped back and waited for him to scream. It was Yang Su-jin's special mixture that she had used on Hip-hop.

"I don't know what this is."

However, I didn't see any bleeding. Glasses was covered in a full body armour, with the helmet exposing his face similar to a motorcycle helmet. There were no gaps for the potion to flow between.

"Sorry but this won't work." Glasses declared.

I heard a moan from behind him. Macho hadn't died yet. Blood was pouring from his pierced neck, but he was still alive and struggling painfully. If Glasses turned around then he could kill Macho.

He thought about it. I didn't miss the moment when Glasses' concentration was shaken for a while and threw a right hook.

Jing!

Along with the sound of hitting iron, Glasses only paused for a moment. However, I was the one who moaned. "Ugh!" I had tried hitting him as an experiment. I was prepared for some injuries, but

the hardness was beyond imagination.

[Current Balance: 598/625. Decelerated state – Leg (50%).]

Deceleration? Legs?

At that moment, I felt a sticky texture on my feet. As I turned my head slightly, I could see a black liquid on the ground where I was standing. There were a few broken bottles on the ground. He had secretly dropped them.

“You aren’t the only one with useful potions.” My shoes were only covered with a little bit. My legs moved slowly like I was drunk. I couldn’t avoid Glasses’ next strike. I bent my arm back and a vibration spread through every corner of my body.

Bam!

Glasses didn’t come that quickly. The power contained in his strike couldn’t be seen. But it was solid. Although his fighting skills were worse than mine, it was like his whole body was made of steel.

Bam! Bam! Bam!

I maintained my guard as I continued to block the strikes. Eventually, my upper body bent over from the hits and I fell to my

knees.

“Pant... Pant...” Glasses was breathing hard because his stamina was poor. However, the rough breathing soon stopped as he smiled faintly. “Your body is pretty solid.”

He took out a knife from his inventory. His answer wasn’t a hit. He intended to take care of it with one more blow. I managed to raise my hands and blocked the knife with a hand.

Indeed. It was difficult to get past the surface of the armour. It wasn’t simply strength.

I took out another vial from my inventory with my spare hand. It wasn’t a drug that I was throwing this time. It was the old, weak version of the poison I received from the sixth floor.

“What, don’t you have the ability to learn?” Glasses turned his head and easily avoided it.

The vial flew towards Macho was screaming in the back. Glasses immediately looked behind him. Macho had pulled out potions from his inventory and had been drinking them.

“Thanks to that, it’ll be easier for me to finish him off. It’s too bad about the treatment medicines.”

“... You lost.” I stated.

“What?” Glasses asked with confusion. I replied to Glasses’ question with a fist. I kept holding the knife with one hand while my other hands pounded his face.

Jing!

There was a tremendous sound as my fist hit Glasses’ helmet. But the helmet was still fine. Blood burst from my hands.

“What are you doing...”

Jing!

One more hit.

Jing!

Yet again.

Jing!

Another one.

“Puak!” Glasses couldn’t even think of attacking me with his spare arm.

“Well, maybe you can break it someday.” Glasses started babbling.

Jing!

“But are you looking at your health bar? Do you know what is funny? I was doing this earlier but your fists are a lot faster.”

Jing!

“Maybe seven years in the future...”

Jjejeok!

“.....!”

Finally. There was a slightly different sound. I swung a fist again.

Jing!

Peeok!

This time, another sound could be heard at the same time. Glasses noticed it as well and frowned. Why, was he starting to feel impatience? But it didn't matter. His techniques were terrible. One hand was being held so he couldn't punch effectively.

Jing!

Peeok!

“W-What th...”

“Now.”

Glasses felt something strange. No matter how bad my punches were, the rate of my health decreasing was somewhat slow.

[Current Balance: 248/625. Decelerated state – Leg (50%).]

[Current Balance: 251/625. Decelerated state – Leg (50%).]

“H... Health...”

It was going up with every punch.

Jing!

Jjejeok!

Akka. I was able to tell by the moans that Macho hadn't died. It was little by little, but my stamina was continuously recovering.

Macho was bleeding from the neck. In other words, the damage I dealt him was coming back to me as health due to the Essence of the Leech.

Jing!

Jjejeok!

The vial I threw before? I thought I needed to recover more health so I threw it. Even if he died, I would receive a certain amount of talent. Even if he didn't die and drank potions, he would be a great source of health. Anyway, Macho was supplying me with health.

Jing!

Jjejejeok!

“Heok...”

At last. The helmet was broken and the face of the stricken Glasses appeared.

“I waited a long time.” I stretched out my fist.

Jjak!

‘Jjak?’ Jjak? The sound wasn’t due to my fist hitting something. It came from my wrist. The sound came from it being cut.

“Hah... Hah...” Glasses smiled with satisfaction as he looked at my wrist.

“Don’t worry.”

I turned my gaze towards his arm. He was still holding the knife firmly. It was a very good move. Now I had lost the function of one of my wrists.

Seuk.

There was no resistance as my wrist was neatly cut off. A smooth section remained in the place where my hand was.

“What?” Glasses thought I was crazy. His face showed that.

Glasses looked at me.

“When I think about it, this happened on the first floor.” I muttered.

“...!?”

As Glasses made an expression like he didn’t understand, I

punched him in the face. I didn't use the smooth section.

First hit. Second hit. Third hit. On the fourth hit, Glasses stopped breathing.

"Huu."

As words rose up, I approached Macho who was writhing on the floor. "Thanks again for everything in the meantime." He was a great source of health. I raised a fist and finished him off. Similar words popped up. Among the words, there were some that stuck out.

[The monarch of Talia has killed the mayor of Falen.]

[All the territories of the mayor of Falen will return to neutral ground.]

[The main territory of Falen. Ownership of 'Industrial City – Falen' has transferred to the monarch of Talia. The coordinates have been registered.]

[Condition: Acquiring control over someone else's domain. Complete.]

[Condition: Register some residents. Complete.]

[Condition: Conquering a territory. Complete.]

[‘Challenge-Exploring’ has ended.]

[‘Challenge – Conquest’ begins.]

Chapter 42 – Day 11, Integration

I didn't gain as many levels as I thought. Every time my level went up, the required experience value doubled. The required experience from level one to level five was 1,500. The required experience to reach level eight from level seven was 3,200.

Even if I gained the experience of two people, it was hard to see a big effect unless I had already accumulated experience. I absorbed the talents from Glasses and Macho. Even so, I didn't see a remarkable climb in my talents, except for a few.

First, this was what I obtained from Glasses.

[Talent has been acquired.]

[Talent – Negotiation: The success rate of negotiation with other parties and the ability to gain more favourable conditions will increase according to the level. Eloquence has slightly increased.]

[Negotiation. Lv 4.]

Apart from that, the only other noteworthy thing was that 'Persuasion' and 'Compulsion' increased by one level. Unexpectedly, the experience of Punching went up quite a bit, but there wasn't a rise in level.

In the case of Macho,

[The level of a talent has risen.]

[Throwing Lv2 -> Lv5. Related abilities have increased.]

[Talent: Throwing. Power and accuracy will increase when throwing something. Muscle strength and health have slightly increased.]

[The level of a talent has risen.]

[Leadership Lv4 -> Lv5. Related abilities have increased.]

[Leadership Lv5. Benefits have opened.]

[Technique has been acquired.]

[Technique – Proper Conduct: Increases the abilities of subordinates when they follow your commands that place them or utilize them in the right places. Regardless of loyalty, the ability will rise depending on whether they submit to your instructions. Can't be applied to two user commands at the

same time.]

[The rise in abilities will depend on the level of Leadership.]

[+1 to the two highest stats.]

I liked that I obtained a technique, but the effect seemed to be useless to me personally. It would be much more helpful to Yang Su-jin and Yoon Ji-hee. I looked down at the body of Glasses. I attempted to peel off the armor from the crushed body, but it was useless. No matter how much strength I used, it wouldn't come off.

Jjejeok!

Jjik!

Finally, one section came off. It wasn't peeled off, but the part that gave it strength was broken. The inside of the removed piece was red. It was like flesh had fallen away.

“...”

I threw the piece on the floor.

“You were lucky to be able to take off the shoes.” A familiar voice was heard from behind me. “The equipment made in Falen are designed according to the user's body from the beginning. There is

no way to wear it other than reassembling it in the factory again.”

I looked behind me, and the stone statue was there. Isaiah. According to him, the old god of the city of Talia. ... He was also a type of operator who managed this dungeon.

“Congratulations.” Of course, he didn’t come here just to tell me this. Or he could no longer bear to not see my face and came to see me directly.

“That isn’t it. Please rest assured. Well, half of it is true.” His neutral voice gave me goosebumps.

“Is this because I conquered something? You must feel obliged to come and pat me on the shoulder.”

“Indeed. You have completed the exploration.”

“I didn’t know the last floor was here.” At first, I thought there would be at least 20 floors.

I moved through the forest while talking. When I came back to the village, there were cold bodies all over the place. It seemed to have been a fairly intense battle, as Yang Su-jin’s sweatshirt was also turned into a bikini. She was kneeling on the floor, hands folded together and eyes closed.

“What are you doing?”

“I’m waiting to change into a beauty. I have killed quite a lot of people. I thought I would suddenly transform like Oppa.”

“... I don’t think that will happen.”

Yang Su-jin opened her eyes and was surprised to see Isaiah.
“Why did he come again?”

“I don’t know.” Isaiah was still quietly following me. If my guess was correct, the answer lay with the fertile field. I started walking with Yang Su-jin.

“Wait a minute, don’t move your arm.” As we moved, Yang Su-jin poured medicine on my wound and took out gauze from the bag. The bleeding at my wrist stopped. However, my HP was still decreasing slowly. Yang Su-jin looked above my head a few times before asking.

“Are you poisoned?”

“Perhaps.”

My fist had punched the poisoned soaked armor... “But blood isn’t pouring from your eyes...”

“It’s due to the change in my body.” It wasn’t enough to kill me, but I felt slight nausea.

“Take a rest! There is no antidote so you just have to wait. Moving around the forest in this state and persuading all the natives...”

“There’s no need to worry.” We were almost there. Once we almost arrived at the fertile field, I turned to Yang Su-jin. “Did you or Hip-hop arrive at the village first?”

“Uh... He arrived a few hours before me.” Not much time had passed.

“I visited six.” I declared as I stepped onto the fertile ground. The space was almost 10 times larger than a village.

“...”

Yang Su-jin couldn’t close her mouth. It was because of the grand sight before her. Hundreds of Tellans were digging at the ground with hoes and shovels. Including the place where I encountered Yang Su-jin, I had directly stopped in six villages.

“Ah, Hee-chul! Su-jin...!” I entrusted the indirect actions to Yoon Ji-hee. The Tellans turned their head this way. As they saw me and then Isaiah, the Tellans all fell to their knees.

“Your Majesty!” The oldest man cried out.

“Your Majesty!” Loud voices rang through the area. They stopped working and waited.

“We have discovered something!” The thing that was revealed wasn’t a staircase or an item. There was a square-shaped slab that five people could fit on. Two overlapping circles were drawn over it.

[Neutral Zone – Evella Forest.]

[A person with a ruling authority can occupy it as their territory.]

This... Occupying the land? “That’s right.” Isaiah answered my thoughts. “The start of... Sixth floor? No, it was from the fifth floor.”

That reminded me of the difference before and after the fifth floor. I asked, “...Maybe the seventh floors are all ‘cities.’ Isn’t that right? It is a structure that allows a person who completely clears the floor to obtain it.”

“It isn’t just the seventh floor. There will be many such neutral areas and cities in the future. However, there is a difference. Not everyone will become a conqueror like you. If you descend several stairs and visit various cities, you will eventually realize the essence.”

The stone statue has said that the fifth floor was the ‘last floor.’ That was an obvious trick. It didn’t matter how many floors I descended. In the end, it was enough if I didn’t die. Furthermore, I could conquer new floors that I encountered. The expression ‘occupying land’ was perfect.

Whether it was ‘monarch’ or ‘mayor.’ Take over the cities and gain control of the people. An explorer who satisfied the three conditions would gain the power of a conqueror. I gained the right to occupy the neutral zones, not just cities. “Basically, there is nothing different from the exploration you have already been doing.”

“... What about after the occupation?”

“Your people can freely move through your territories using the stairs. Other explorers can’t enter your territory through the stairs.” That wasn’t what I was asking. He should be well aware of that.

“Will something change if I occupy the land here?”

“... No.” Isaiah replied after a moment of silence. “Didn’t I tell you? When you got the title of monarch on the seventh floor, I said there won’t be any help. Of course, you can still get talents through the conquest process.”

“...”

There was something strange. It was like dangling a carrot in front of a child. This was the first time it appeared. No matter if he was an explorer or conqueror, there was no practical help.

Let's think about it. My mind was better than this.

“... This. It is your purpose, isn’t it?”

The Tellans said they couldn’t go beyond the stairs into other areas. But was it possible if I took over a territory?

“You can’t do it with your own strength. Repair the broken cities and gather the people scattered in these areas. So take them instead.”

The Tellans here had nothing, but it was because there was nothing in this forest. Their intellectual level and old belongings showed that they were civilized people trapped in a forest, rather than primitive people. What if they went to Talia? The culture and environment was more hospitable, making them bloom.

“This whole place is as if you made it for us... Maybe the course was really decided on the fifth floor.” In that sense, the fifth floor would be the last floor. “The places after the fifth floor... So... This dungeon is a world in itself. Gather the scattered places and people.”

The purpose was obvious. The worlds of these people were completely broken. I was a tool that would sew the pieces together

again. Their civilization would flourish in the world again.

Create more desires and dreams. "... Almost accurate... It is amazing." Isaiah marvelled.

"Don't praise me if you aren't going to give me anything." I stepped on the slab.

[The monarch of Talia has occupied the neutral zone – Evella Forest.]

[Currently holding three territories.]

[Spatial integration. Talia, Evella Forest, Falen.]

"... Ack?" My vision suddenly changed. Had I cleared this dungeon floor?

But the words weren't visible. The thing shown in front of my eyes... It was a sun that I had already seen once before. Talia's sun. I was floating in the air. Below my feet, there was a wide scene that couldn't be easily processed.

Talia. There were some people moving around and the golems seemed a bit bigger. But that wasn't all. To the north, there were dark buildings that were different from Talia's stone buildings. Like Talia, the area was also occupied by civilians.

“That is the factory city, Falen.” Isaiah suddenly appeared next to me and said.

“Is that Evella Forest?” In the west, there was a place that looked like a wad of cotton.

Isaiah nodded. It seemed like he just intended to show me the landscape, as we gradually descended and set foot on the ground. “If you conquer an area or kill another conqueror, it will automatically be added to your territory. The same thing will happen when you step on the stairs.”

“Wait a minute, then I am now...”

“A conqueror can remain in his territory for as long as they want. But time will flow just like in your world. You will have to wait until midnight to go to a new floor.”

If time passed as it did in reality then it would be morning right now.

“Does that mean I don’t have to rule?”

“You can do that. Basically, the cities have their own rules and cultures. There will be some trial and error, but it won’t be a problem if you neglect it. Of course, it doesn’t change the fact that you are their master and saviour.”

It was lucky. I didn't need to take over management of the territories. ‘

“You can just enjoy their submission.”

“I’m not interested in that.” Being a king was a act that would pledge time in reality as collateral. This wasn’t a holiday, but a place to train my talents.

“Let’s see. The more people there are, the more ‘enjoyable’ it will be. That’s what I think.” Isaiah said with a very sly smile. “In this way, the territories you have gathered will assemble into one piece.”

“If I die?” I recalled the words that appeared when Macho died.

“The capital, Talia, is taken over by the one who killed you. The other areas will return to their original place. It will stay like that until someone makes it their territory.”

“How great.” I responded lightly, but an image was being drawn in my head. The dungeon wasn’t just a ‘set’ to be cleared, but part of a real world. Of course, things for ‘production’ would remain intact.

“The things here. Do I have ownership over them?”

“There are no rules, but if you want it then you can take the item without paying the citizens. It is also up to you to deprive the

people of their citizenship.’ There were various precious metals and food. Looking at it broadly... I could get various high-ranking items from the factory city.

The wider the area was, the more materials that could be produced. This was also true of the Kasava grown in Evella Forest. Even without light, it was a crop that could be endlessly grown from fertile land. I was just a university student in reality so I couldn’t realize the full benefits, but it was obviously a crop with great potential.

The scale was too big. It was a reward that was different from receiving talents.

Well, it wasn’t bad. It made no difference in my need to break through the dungeon. Every day, I would discover a new area and fight with others. It was just that the unknown conditions had increased.

“Please.”

“Huh?”

“I hope you will be the winner. It would be a great source of pride for me if this becomes the capital of the new empire.”

Empire. “Is that the goal? Assembling everything into one piece?”

“I hope that the same destruction won’t be repeated twice.” The cause was people losing their dreams.

“‘Desires’ and ‘wants’ arise from relationships with other beings. That’s why I think it is a privilege only for living creatures.” Isaiah declared.

“It roughly sounds right.”

“That’s why a leader is needed. A figure that people will look up to, respect and obey, as well as stimulate their dreams.” He looked at me while speaking. I felt quite a lot of pressure from his eyes.

“Not just as a symbol, but a being that is the ultimate existence. An existence that isn’t satisfied with the status quo and is constantly advancing. Someone different from beasts. A being that can move freely without being dominated by their own desires.”

If there was such a person then I would like to be introduced to them.

“Of course there isn’t one. That’s why I am trying to make it.” The stone statue continued with a significant remark. “The ‘Emperor’ will be the ideal being.”

Chapter 43 – Day 12, Cooperation

Yang Su-jin and Yoon Ji-hee weren't here. After conquering the forest according to Isaiah's rules, the two people disappeared with the same effect as though the floor had been cleared.

I was still affected by the poison. My HP was still slowly reducing. Since my time limit wasn't infinite, it was impossible to relax until the poison had worn off. But there was still work to do.

I ordered some Tellans to carry a corpse out of the forest. They immediately followed my instructions and carried the body of Glasses to the factory city. The golems were waiting there. The 'Falen Guards' were stone statues that were much smaller than the Talia Knights.

Their rank was C+ and they were mostly dormant. Their language speaking ability wasn't very smooth. "Now. Workshop is in downtime. Remaining power source and raw materials are completely exhausted."

I wanted to lie down on a bed but I gave orders to the guards. I called the Talia golems. There were batteries that received energy from sunlight not just inside the golem, but throughout Talia's facilities as well. "Can you turn this factory on?"

"In the case of the guards, the power source can be replaced immediately. It will take some time to improve the workshop facilities."

I handed over Glasses' body. "The armor this brat is wearing, can you take it off and recycle it?"

"It is possible once the workshop is running. In the case of additional goods production, the raw materials are insufficient."

"Keep it." If I wanted to make something here, then I needed to obtain an iron mine or something similar. This was enough for now. My body was shaking more and more. My eyelids kept on wanting to close. I was too sick to do any more... Despite my enhanced body, this was the limit.

I used the golems to head to the stairs in the centre of Talia. Just as I was about to step on the stairs, "That, King..." An elderly person approached me and started talking. He was an elder of one of the villages in the forest. "Thank you again for the blessing you have given us. If you command us..."

"I know." Once again, I didn't want to play as a king. Even small villages had experienced leaders, so it would be good if I didn't need to touch it. "Just familiarize yourself with this city and how to use the facilities. Well, that is the end. Goodbye."

"We will keep that in mind. If King wants..."

"Huh?" The old man stepped aside to reveal some girls. They were women in their mid teens and early 20's. In the meantime, they had washed up and decorated themselves, revealing a gorgeous appearance.

“Once you get enough rest. These attendants...”

“Ah. No need. I don’t need them.” I raised my arm with the severed hand. Aside from whether I liked them or not, I couldn’t do anything with a body like this. ... In addition, the Tellans were similar to humans, but I didn’t know what would actually happen. I wasn’t going to risk myself in the dungeon by indulging in carnal lust. I wouldn’t accept any of them.

I stepped on the stairs without hesitation.

My eyes were currently at the limit. Blood gushed from my neck as I stepped on the stairs.

[Return.]

It was 3:00 p.m. I received a fifth call.

[Well done. Let’s go eat with the other study group members.]

“Yes.” The results for the exams of the major subjects came out a little faster than usual. Even if the name didn’t appear, the identity could be roughly grasped using the student number. The people who saw my score immediately sent me a message or called me.

My rank for Systems Programming and Operating Systems was respectively a ‘3’ then ‘4’. For the Electrical Circuits Test, I received the first rank.

Of course, I was glad. I had accomplished something I had never done before. It wasn’t just the exams for this semester, but everything I could do in the future. It was also scary.

Chwaack.

I washed my face with cold water and looked in the mirror. The face still felt a little unfamiliar to me. I had changed. Starting with my appearance to the amount of time it took to understand something.

I was born again in just 11 days. No matter who thought about it, the tremendous growth was bound to be strange for those who knew about the dungeon.

Now I needed to be prepared. There was the possibility of a second or third Lee Sang-yoon appearing. At this point, it was meaningless to hide the abilities I had gained from the dungeon. There would be few survivors around here.

But what about the few who had survived? I might meet them someday. So far, I was a predator, but that was because the sea was wide and there were many prey to fill the area. Whenever a floor was cleared, dozens of prey would disappear. Only predators were left.

Furthermore, it was a bit different from nature. Predators in the natural world weren't willing to fight bigger opponents. A shark didn't choose the prey. But in the dungeon, the size of the prey and the taste of meat were proportional. Every shark was looking for a mass of food similar to themselves.

Yiing.

The phone on my desk vibrated. It was Yoon Ji-hee. She had already contacted me once in the morning. Yoon Ji-hee wouldn't call me for nothing. I took a deep breath before pressing the accept call button.

Then I picked up the call.

It was the first time I was riding a car with a driver, except for taxis of course. I looked at the scenery passing through the window. I was alone in the car. There was no Yoon Ji-hee. Chairman Yoon gave direct orders. 'I'll send a car to get you to the destination.'

Yoon Ji-hee was stuttering from panic but I understood immediately. "Well, it isn't a big deal."

It was serious. He was the chairman of a big company. It wasn't unusual for the old man to expect his words to be obeyed. So I took several deep breaths. Things could happen if I tried to hurt Yoon Sang-gyu. There was no other way.

In addition, the scenery passing by was the center of Seoul I had already looked at the destination on the navigator before the car started.

[You have arrived at your destination.]

UZ Convention Centre. It was a place that was always crowded with various events, including expos. I was guided to an indoor stage. It had approximately 300 seats, usually used for seminars.

I walked to the door. “Hrmm.”

After a moment, The soundproofed door was opened very slowly. Numerous eyes could be felt from inside the room. To be specific, they were looking at any new people who entered. People were sparsely sat throughout the audience seats.

Nine? No, eight. Including me, it was nine. I could somehow feel it. There was a strange atmosphere even before I came in. This was an aquarium. It was a collection of sharks.

“...”

It felt like sticky tongues were licking my whole body. I ignored their gazes and memorized the faces of the eight people here. Then I picked a spot and sat down. A few minutes later, a person

appeared on stage.

He was a man in his early 30s wearing a suit. He seemed like a worker who had spent a few nights away. “Nice to meet you.” The man hit the mike a few times before talking. “Honestly, I was a bit worried. I’m glad that everyone showed up. Well, you are all great people and might have the same idea...”

I didn’t know what he was talking about. The man continued speaking. “Ah... I should introduce myself. I’m sorry. I’ve been out of my mind for a few days... I am Kim Tae-hyun, the deputy manager. You can just call me Kim Tae-hyun. Deputy Manager Kim. Anything is fine.”

The most important thing was that he didn’t say ‘where’ he was the deputy manager. However, it wasn’t a mistake. “This is a national affair.” He briefly added at the end.

“How did you know about me?” I heard someone asking.

Kim Tae-hyun scratched his head and replied. “There are reports and data from many layers of society. It is clear if a person suddenly shows outstanding skill, exam results, performance reports etc. Once someone knows about the dungeon, there are many areas that can be investigated.”

If so, the people were gathered here for a reason. “Is the country trying to control us?”

“Huh? No! That’s not it. There is no reason for that, nor do I think we should do so. Are you doing anything that will harm society?” To be more precise, we couldn’t harm society. It seemed correct.

“The purpose of this is to create some minimal rules. We hope to build a partnership with you.” Kim Tae-hyun explained.

Killing a person in reality would allow the killer to receive their talent. There was at least one person here who was thinking about killing everyone else here.

“The growth in physical abilities far beyond ordinary people allows you to kill an unspecified number of people. That would be a bloodbath. I asked you here in order to prevent that.” Kim Tae-hyun raised his index finger. “In the dungeon, please kill everyone else except for you.”

“...!”

“...!?” Some groaned, some laughed.

I felt like laughing. It was because the words sounded psychotic. Who would be the ones likely to kill people in reality? The people gathered here? No. Those who attended here only wanted to kill each other, strictly limiting it to sharks.

But the ones like Lee Sang-yoon were different. Even though their self-esteem was strong, it was broken inside the dungeon.

Those people would risk their lives to kill people in reality. We should kill those weak ones.

That's why they called us. If the strong minority gathered here handled it, at least reality would be clean. "Of course, it isn't for nothing. Some of you are enjoying the benefits of being a leader, so I won't ask you to kill your subordinates without any compensation."

Kim Tae-hyuk clapped and men in suits emerged from the back of the stage, pushing a few carts. "You will be able to come out of the dungeon with the body part of a person killed. If you bring a recognizable source of identity, such as a fingerprint, you will be paid a certain amount of points per person after some investigation in reality."

However, in reality, no one would die. Society would be calm without any problems. That's what they wanted. While Kim Tae-hyun pulled open the lid of a box, I paid more attention to Kim Tae-hyun. I wasn't in a position to speak. But I could feel assured about something. Kim Tae-hyun was a formidable psycho.

"I will be happy to swap this for points. They are just samples so if you have any questions then please ask." Once the boxes were opened, everyone let out a groan. "Everyone should have the default ability to take this into the dungeon."

They were guns painted in different colours, like toys. Placed together, they seemed like explosives.

“Ah, this isn’t a very important question.” Kim Tae-hyun said like he suddenly recalled something, drawing the attention back to him. He threw a surprise hook.

“If you are a ‘king,’ then please raise your hand.”

Chapter 44 – Day 12, Points

What was this?

It was the perfect response to the situation. In fact, the place became quiet. Kim Tae-hyun had casually asked this question. Naturally, there was no one who would raise their hand to say ‘yes.’

“...?” Kim Tae-hyun’s eyes widened. It was no wonder. Something happened that he didn’t expect. He never thought that there would be someone who would raise their hand.

“If you are referring to a city, then I have one.” I raised my hand. All eyes followed Kim Tae-hyun’s gaze towards me.

Why had Kim Tae-hyun asked this? In the first place, it was a ridiculous question. Who was a ‘king’?

“How surprising.” I muttered once I confirmed that there was no one other than me. “But why did you ask?”

“It’s nothing. I just wanted to verify the information.” Kim Tae-hyun said slowly in a calm tone. Perhaps he assumed that this conversation wouldn’t happen. Originally, I came here to figure out how many people I would have to get rid of. Sorry but it was a big bet for me just coming here. I didn’t intend to watch passively.

“Then can I ask you a question?” I asked him.

“What is it?”

“After this is over, I would like to talk to you about being a ‘king’. With just you.” Kim Tae-hyun’s expression became slightly animated. I didn’t know if the other people here could read Kim Tae-hyun’s expression, but I certainly could.

Why?

Due to the structure of the dungeon, it was only on the eighth floor that people would realize that being a ‘king’ was meaningful. Then how did Kim Tae-hyun know about it? Other than the people here, was he also a shark?

No.

Kim Tae-hyun had a person who was a ‘king’ and ‘conqueror’ on his side. The chances were high that it was Kim Tae-hyun. “We are done, but if you wait, I’m going to pass something out to all of you.”

In fact, he had already delivered all his facts. Soon, the people in the black suits headed to the seats and handed out small handbooks. It was like a diary where additional papers could be added.

There was a total of three catalogues. There were familiar guns that I had only seen in games. The fingerprints from the dungeon

gave a minimum of five points each. I could become the protagonist of a FPS game just by having four of them. There were a few bulletproof vests and grenades.

I used a ballpoint pen to check the price list of several things, including a high-performance radio or a heated suit made of a new material.

“Please exchange contact information with us so that you can call at any time. You don’t have to worry about legally possessing these items, but please bear in mind that there might be some confusion if this is exposed to others or leaked to the private sector.”

Kim Tae-hyun’s main point was finished there. “In the future, I will contact you directly if there is something else. Of course, it is up to you if you want to attend or not. We can mutually benefit from each other. I hope there will be cooperation between us.”

There was a sound as the back doors opened. I stood up. I headed straight to the back of the stage. Eight pairs of eyes followed me.

“Follow me.” Kim Tae-hyun and I walked into the hallway behind the stage.

As we headed down the emergency stairs and appeared in a quiet place, Kim Tae-hyun turned towards me. “Frankly, I was surprised. I didn’t think that someone would actively come out like this.”

“There was no reason to hide it.” Among the eight people here, there were two faces that I knew. Yoon Chan-hee and Yoon Da-hee. Yoon Ji-hee’s cousins who were siblings. I hadn’t met them directly, but had received photos from Yoon Ji-hee.

Let’s think about it. For the children of a chaebol, they had more to lose than gain from attending this meeting. Of course, if a grenade exploded in front of me right now, then I would surely die. But wouldn’t it just cost them some money to obtain guns that could be brought into the dungeon? So why did Chairman Yoon Sang-gyu instruct me to go to this place? If it was simply for reconnaissance purposes, was he planning to use me through Yoon Ji-hee?

“The position of ‘king.’ Honestly, I didn’t come here to talk about that.” I said. This place was safe, and I had something to gain. Even the chairman changed his policy about interfering and directed his grandchildren to attend. I looked through the handbook.

“Besides what’s listed here, can I use the points to purchase other requested things?”

“That’s right.” Kim Tae-hyun replied. It meant I could order weapons not listed in the catalogue.

“What exactly is this? I would like to ask you.”

This was South Korea. More than the gun itself, the right to own a gun was hundreds of times more expensive. It was like that even if I wanted an air gun for hunting. No matter how rich and

powerful a person was, did they have the right to hand out weapons? It was easy for the UZ family to obtain a gun, but if it was seen outside the dungeon then it would cause an uproar.

Yet this person said a blind eye would be turned. The country's rules were ignored to give individual rights. Was that the only thing that could be bought with points?

"Is it possible to get other legal benefits? Things like tax evasion or immunity for big and small crimes?" Kim Tae-hyun was silent for a moment. He didn't seem confused. He looked at the floor for a moment before saying.

"The ordinary people woke up after dying, with no knowledge of the dungeon."

"...?"

"The number of people who can tell someone about the existence of the dungeon is reduced. In other words, the dungeon is a place that ordinary people don't know exists. I have absolutely faith in that." Kim Tae-hyun grinned. "But no matter what, the dungeon actually exists. Points are the same, in that they already exist. The department that I work in manages that."

My speculation was right. Points were something that existed before the dungeon.

"Of course, it isn't unrealistic like the dungeon. The rules are

simple. Sometimes, the country can't afford to pay a performance based compensation to an individual. If the country doesn't have what the individual wants, or can't give it, the person will be angry.”

“Then getting paid in points...”

“Points are for the sake of convenience. It works so that order doesn't collapse in society as a whole.” So... It was a type of reserve fund for corporations to gain immunity. Then I had another question. What was the credit for the reserves?

What could I gain if I saved the points for later instead of changing it for a gun straight away? “You don't have to use the points earned straight away. You can rest assured about that part. Hee-chul can contact us at any time.”

“...”

Kim Tae-hyun said my name for the first time. “It's a system that has existed much longer than you think. Anyone can use the points. The way to use it depends on the person.”

“...” Applying it to things like stealing or killing. I didn't know how many people used points, but no one could use points for such a purpose. Starting with taxes, there were a number of laws people would have to deal with as their social status increased.

“If I didn't ask...”

“There is no obligation to tell you. You have to speak clearly. If you want additional items added to the catalogue then contact us later.” If I didn’t know the truth about points, then I would be wasting it on something else. Who among the eight people outside would be in a position to know about the points? I could presume that Yoon Chan-hee and Yoon Da-hee came for this purpose.

“I don’t think there is any problem. If you don’t have the status to know about it at first, then you will soon be out in the dungeon.” Kim Tae-hyun replied.

“... I think that is a very poor criteria for judgment.”

“Let’s see? Society is already in transition. The bloodlines have already been filtered to a certain extent. I’m a little old fashioned.” Kim Tae-hyun gaze swept over my whole body. “Well, I suppose there are some exceptions.”

“...”

“If I hadn’t told you about points right now, I think you would have discovered it eventually.” Sometimes the first impression could be wrong. Just like this time. I was often mistaken for an office worker due to my dark circles and clothes, but I wasn’t one.

“Hrmm. Then are you questions over? Even though you raised your hand about being a king, I don’t think there is anything else to say about it.” I nodded. “Good. Well, I enjoyed it.”

As we walked, a door to the stage opened wide. A person wearing a suit hurried out. Kim Tae-hyun watched him with a confused expression before saying to me, “Well, I was nice enough to answer some questions. Now I have a little question. Did you have to take the risk of revealing yourself as a king for that?”

“You might think so.” The suited person came this way. My sensitive senses could smell the faint scent of blood.

“What do you mean?”

“Yes. The other eight people. Will they really leave without any conflicts?”

“... Why...”

Kim Tae-hyun frowned and realized a tempo too late. He had good insight but it was still too late. The suited person was able to successfully approach this side.

Peng!

There was a small explosion that was approximately one meter in diameter. “Keuk!” Despite quickly defending with his arms, Kim Tae-hyun coughed blood and was thrown back.

Five to six metres? Kim Tae-hyun slipped and hit the ground. I

had already pulled my body back.

“You...” Kim Tae-hyun looked up at me with a puzzled expression. The front of Kim Tae-hyun’s body was severely burnt. Although his life wasn’t at risk, it was obvious that he wouldn’t be able to act right now.

“I’ll tell you in advance, but I’m not involved in this.” I said to Kim Tae-hyun. I shrugged as I looked at the suited man. If he had the talent then he was welcome to try and kill me. I didn’t know his abilities, but I definitely felt his killing intent. From the first time I saw the eight people, I was aiming at every one of them.

There was nothing to lose, especially if they turned out to be kings. Every one of them might be kings and pretending not to be. I just put it out there in the beginning. It didn’t even matter if they were kings. A wild beast would just ignore public authority. The person in front of me, one of the eight people, looked like delicious prey.

“If you’re not on the same side...”

“I will either fight or run away. But it is likely that one of you will die.” The suited man took one person by surprise but I was confident about facing him. It was enough to finish him off before others could come.

“But can you really kill someone? It isn’t something that can be overlooked.” The suited man said.

“...!” I had already stepped back while raising my guard. I could run away at any time.

“If the punishment for murder was lighter, then I wouldn’t flee...” I said to Kim Tae-hyun.

He replied. “I-I will take responsibility. No matter what happens here... I promise I have the authority...” Kim Tae-hyun was bleeding from a severe wound on his neck.

The suited person lowered his upper body towards us. There was no time left. How long was left until he would rush? 10 seconds? “... I promise.” Kim Tae-hyun declared.

“Is that the end?” I asked.

“What?”

“Shouldn’t there be an agreement before I kill someone?” I looked at Kim Tae-hyun as I spoke. It was bait.

Hwakak!

The suited person didn’t miss the gap and rushed forward. A hand quickly stretched out towards me. It was only for a brief moment, but I saw a pattern engraved on the back of his palm.

Peng!

There was an explosion behind me. The hand of the suited man passed over my shoulder. I gripped his elbow firmly and pushing his other arm as far away from me as possible. At first glance, it seemed like a tense power struggle. The suited person looked like he didn't know what to think.

I turned my head again, looking down at Kim Tae-hyun. “Back to what I was saying.” I met Kim Tae-hyun’s eyes.

“Points, how much will you give me?”

Chapter 45 – Day 12, Flame

“...” A groan emerged from Kim Tae-hyun’s mouth instead of words. I understood enough. It seemed like he was still making calculations.

Seuk.

I felt the suited man’s arm stiffen from where I was holding it by the elbow. It was very light, but the weight of the arm had changed. He had taken something out from his inventory and was holding it in his hand.

I put strength into both arms and pushed. The suited man wobbled and I used the gap to kick him in the abdomen.

Kung.

The suited man was thrown backwards and the dagger in his hand fell down. I looked at Kim Tae-hyun again.

“...72.”

“72?” It was a pretty vague and small number.

Kim Tae-hyun held a machine in his trembling hands. It was like a smartphone PDA device. “This machine keeps me from giving out points too recklessly... No. There is a clear quota for every

point..."

"Kuok!" A moan came from the suited man. There was pain and anger on his face. I hadn't controlled my strength when kicking him. He was definitely a worthy opponent.

I didn't think that 72 points were all I could get, but I shouldn't be too greedy here. The suited man stretched out his palm again.

Tang!

There was a noise like a cannon being fired. As fire emerged from the palm of his hand, I turned my body to the side. The source of the explosion swept past my chest. The shape of the ball was one metre in diameter. As it crossed the distance, it became thinner and longer.

It seemed like he could freely change its shape and size. The suited man extended his other hand. A second flame emerged and I barely managed to avoid it. At the same time, he pulled out a spear.

Syuok!

Peng!

There was a third explosion. Then the tip of the spear crossed the gap between us, but it failed to hit its target. The only thing I felt was a pain in my left side as I backed up. It wasn't a direct hit, but the explosion had slightly struck me.

“...!” I realized that I had failed to avoid the fourth explosion. The suited person stepped backwards. He was trying to run away, but he was at a disadvantage. My reaction speed was higher. In addition, the narrow corridor and difficulty in firing ranged weapons meant I could easily catch up with him.

I closed in on him. I didn’t want to expose all my secrets to the guy behind me. Still, it couldn’t be helped. I triggered Darkness Cloud.

“What the!?” The suited man cried out with confusion. He randomly fired his explosions. Although the length and thickness of the explosive balls were smaller, a large number of them crossed the darkness.

Face. Torso. Arm. Legs. I ignored the explosions hitting my body and ran forward.

“Eek!”

I was only a few steps away. The man gathered his two palms together. I moved forward even faster than before. Some hits were expected due to the close proximity, but I took advantage of the width and length of the corridor as much as possible.

I would see how long he could sustain that firepower. I took a deep breath.

My vision was filled with flames.

‘Dammit.’ Kim Tae-hyun was able to take out a potion just before Hee-chul spread out the darkness.

It was a potion that temporarily maximized the regeneration power and immunity of the whole body. He didn’t know how he could consume such a valuable bottle that was the size of a milk bottle here, but it couldn’t be helped.

The medicine was amazing. It would take a considerable amount of time for his wounds to be healed, but that was better. Otherwise, he might become involved in the explosions.

Peeng!

“Ack!” Flames filled the narrow corridor. He guarded his body with his arms, but he couldn’t stop his hair and skin from screaming silently.

Swaahh.

The sprinklers turned on and the fire alarms sounded loudly. The explosions disappeared but smoke filled the entire corridor. The smell of burned flesh hung thickly in the air. Kim Tae-hyun clearly smelt it. It wasn’t simply the smell of hair or skin burning. It was the gross smell of fat burning.

‘They’ve both died.’ It wasn’t the worst thing he faced, but it was right up there near the top. For Kim Tae-hyun, explorers were resources. Killing them to gain their abilities wasn’t the only solution. He had the benefit of being a spokesperson for the country, as well as acquiring talents as an explorer. His plan was to climb to the top using these two things.

This could become a reality through the dungeon.

In the history of mankind, the leaders had never been a flawless ironman. A sole willpower that reigned over the ignorant majority. Still, his perspective was different after the dungeon. While some people dismissed the dungeon as nonsense, he was quick to understand.

‘I have no interest in being king of the world.’ He would be the hand behind the world’s king. Kim Tae-hyun took a step into the smoke.

“...!” There was a shape inside the smoke. The person turned towards him. It was Hee-chul.

“You’re alive.” As he moved further and the smoke cleared, Kim Tae-hyun involuntarily cried out. Hee-chul had no clothes left on his body. No, to be precise, he had no skin or anything else. It was more appropriate to call it the charcoal silhouette of a person.

Red muscles were exposed between the blue and dark area. The suited man was lying collapsed at Hee-chul’s feet. Tae-hyun

assumed that he was caught up in the power of the explosion that he himself created.

“Hey.” Hee-chul didn’t answer. There was no movement. “Hey.” Kim Tae-hyun pulled out a gun. Keeping Hee-chul alive wasn’t bad, but an opportunity like this was rare. There were explosions so he had pretty sound justifications for the deaths.

Although he didn’t design this situation, he had caught the perfect prey on his fishing line. If the suited person hadn’t blown up the hallway, then Kim Tae-hyun wouldn’t have received this chance.

“...”

... It was really for that reason. It absolutely wasn’t because of the fear that he couldn’t control this person. Kim Tae-hyun whispered to himself.

The moment he lifted his gun,

Chobeok.

Hee-chul turned around.

“...” He had confidence in his skills. He was an excellent shooter. Since he was always carrying a gun, Tae-hyun was able to bring the gun with him from the first floor. Of course, his shooting and firearms talent had a high level. There was probably no one better

at shooting in Korea than him. But he couldn't pull the trigger.

"That thing in your hand..." The distance between him and Hee-chul was enough. It was obvious that Hee-chul couldn't move properly with his burnt muscles. "I'm not sure how to interpret it." A steady voice came out as the mouth of the charred human body opened.

'Pull.' The voice in his head said. But his body didn't listen. Was it because he was overwhelmed by Hee-chul's grotesque appearance? Those eyes? The nonchalant voice that seemed to see through him?

"If you don't answer, then it can't be helped." Hee-chul declared. There was only one thing that Kim Tae-hyun could do. "I'll be forced to defend myself."

"No, I wasn't aiming at you." The muzzle went down. With a calm expression, Kim Tae-hyun raised his hand and pointed to the body of the suited person. "I thought he might have survived. Sorry. Your visual was so severe that..."

"..."

Kim Tae-hyun trembled. 'You can't kill me.' Kim Tae-hyun had the means to legally cover up this incident. Kim Tae-hyun guessed that Hee-chul wasn't crazy enough to dismiss society's rules. He was the type to handle things reasonably.

Chobeok.

Hee-chul approached him. No. Was his guess right? Those eyes. Why was he looking at Kim Tae-hyun with those eyes? “If you come too close...” Ignoring Kim Tae-hyun’s words, Hee-chul reached towards him.

“Ack!” Kim Tae-hyun reflexively raised his gun.

Teob.

Hee-chul read it perfectly. The palm of his hand completely covered the muzzle of the gun and stopped its movement. Despite the charred hand, Tae-hyun felt a strength that he couldn’t cope with through the barrel of the gun.

Hee-chul extended his other hand. Kim Tae-hyun unconsciously gritted his teeth. “... I would appreciate it if you gave that to me.”

What? Kim Tae-hyun stared at the hand that stopped right in front of his face. The palm of his hand was facing up. “It looks like you have good medicine. Your wound is completely healed. If there is anything left then I would appreciate it.” Hee-chul seized the gun from Kim Tae-hyun’s left hand. “Please.”

Tell him that there was no medicine. Instead, Tae-hyun would give him the best first aid possible. While Kim Tae-hyun’s head was talking, his hand was taking out a bottle. He couldn’t pass this bottle over just like that. Just open the lid and give him a few

drops. Kim Tae-hyun made this decision when...

Kung!

There was the sound of banging on one door in the corridor. Tae-hyun paused briefly. Hee-chul's hand eased the bottle away. "Ah..."

"Thank you." Tae-hyuk involuntarily let go.

"Deputy Manager-nim!" A door on the other side of the corridor opened and a group of people in black suits poured out. Among them were the remaining seven explorers, not including Hee-chul and the suited man. They happened to hear the sound of the explosions and came running.

"Okay... You..." The people in suits swallowed as they saw Hee-chul.

"Can you bring me something to wear?" Hee-chul said in a polite voice. Of course, the rest of his things had disappeared into his inventory. The men in suits looked at Kim Tae-hyun, who nodded. Some people quickly left to get clothes for Hee-chul.

"A lot... have gathered." Hee-chul looked at the rest of the people after putting on his clothes.

"Sorry if I scared you... Instead of saying anything... I have something to tell all of you. For those who were aiming at me

because I am a king..." New skin was covering the burn skin. Hee-chul's appearance was really grotesque. "If you encounter me on the next floor then you should look elsewhere."

Just like a demon from manhwa, Hee-chul spoke with a face that was half healed. "I will recommend you to go straight down the nearest stairs instead of giving into your vain greed." The sharks didn't panic at his words. Hee-chul didn't mean to scare them.

Hee-chul said one more thing. "Of course, at the end of the day, I will also be the one going down the stairs."

Most of the larger sharks took it as a declaration of interest. "If you keep repeating this step and going straight down the stairs, then you'll be able to stay safe until the end."

Hee-chul took the initiative.

Chapter 46 – Day 12, Theft

I thought they would bring me a blanket at most, but Kim Tae-hyun's brought me pants, a t-shirt, jacket and sneakers. After changing clothes and looking in the bathroom mirror, I examined something I learned today: Essences could also be absorbed.

[Essence – Elder Salamander]

[The ‘Fire Lizard’s Mark’ will be inscribed on both hands. It is possible to switch it from an active/inactive state through a command.]

[Fire and heat resistance have increased by 10%. This won’t turn off as long as your HP doesn’t fall below one.]

[The average body temperature will rise by one degree. There is no physical deterioration caused by high body temperature.]

[You have become 5% more vulnerable to cold air.]

[Technique – Fire Lizard’s Mark: A technique that controls the energy of a salamander through the inscriptions on both hands. You can shoot out flames of various sizes and shapes, as well as in the form of explosions. They are magical flames, but consume the user’s ‘Hunger’ and ‘HP’ instead of magic power. If either of these numbers aren’t high enough, then it can’t be

used.]

[The maximum firepower will rise in proportion to the level. Precision has increased.]

[Once active/inactive is used, it requires five minutes for the next inactive/active.]

[Become 50% more vulnerable to the cold when active.]

[Current level: Lv 1. 1/100]

It was certainly a pleasure to gain the technique that almost killed me, but my resistance against the cold had further weakened. It was already weak due to the leech essence. Moreover, the suited man wasn't a king. I hadn't seen a message about gaining a city. He might not have tried this if he had such a position.

The Fire Lizard's Mark. Active.

The same pattern as the suited man appeared on the palm of my hands. I imagined a flame. I imagined the explosion that attacked me earlier.

Hwakak.

At that moment, a very delicate flame rose from the palm of my hand. Of course, it was an intentionally small fire. Was it due to my imagination being enhanced in the dungeon? I was able to create a much cleaner flame compared to what the suited man blew from his hands.

As I heard footsteps coming into the men's bathroom, I formed a fist. Then I turned towards the entrance of the bathroom. "Have the rest of the people been sent back?" I asked Kim Tae-hyun, who had just entered the bathroom.

Of course, I didn't order it, but Kim Tae-hyun was bound to do so. It was the most obvious action after explosions had occurred. I had done such a widespread provocation that it was unknown what type of conflict would have occurred if Kim Tae-hyun left it alone.

"Take this." Kim Tae-hyun threw a piece of paper at me. It was laser printed paper like a bank sheet. The ID of a virtual account to handle electronic money and the password were written. The account contained '72' points, the number I earned today.

I asked a question in a blunt manner. "How many points to cover up murder?"

"It varies." The answer came back straight away. "It's because the value of human life isn't the same."

I personally disagreed with that, but it wasn't the place to discuss the value of human life.

“In addition, it will be different depending on how they are killed and the situation going on around them. We look at the convenience of covering up the murder. For example, if there were thousands of witnesses in the middle of a city then it would cost thousands of points.” Kim Tae-hyun continued. “But... Let’s see... If there are no witnesses and the victim doesn’t have a nuisance job like a journalist or lawyer... It will be around 50 points.”

He seemed like a salesperson describing a product in the catalogue. I could understand the meaning in his eyes. If there was a mysterious and sudden death, the police would turn away if the victim didn’t have a special background.

Yes. That was exactly what I wanted to know. For example, even if I was stronger than Yoon Sang-gyu’s grandchildren, I couldn’t attack them first. Their status wasn’t a joke. But they didn’t have to worry about that. I had a weaker status. They might try and use their points to bury me with no hesitation.

“Is this an unfair game? The man who attacked us before is in a lower bracket than you. Maybe he noticed this unfairness and acted.”

I bent down and tied my shoelaces. Then I asked. “What about theft?”

“... Theft?”

“For example, if I steal someone’s wallet, then is there a

difference between stealing from an ordinary person and high class person?” Kim Tae-hyun narrowed his eyes.

“There isn’t a single person who would use points on such a ‘wasteful’ thing. At least, I’ve found that throughout my career.”

“But it isn’t certain.”

Kim Tae-hyun was silent for a moment. “... It depends on the material worth. It depends on how much capacity the victim has to punish you. If it is a simple pickpocket then it should be around two points.”

“Hrmm.”

“I roughly know what you are thinking.” Oh really?

“If you try to hack in order to gain more points, then it’s useless. Points are a distinct credit asset that this country deals in. A person with a mere background shouldn’t make a fuss.”

“...”

Kim Tae-hyun had almost growled out the words.

“If I think about a pickpocket...”

I got up. As soon as I got up, I moved closer to Kim Tae-hyun.

“Uh!” Kim Tae-hyun gave a short moan but didn’t pull his body back. He thought I was trying to scare him.

“I asked because of this.” I pulled out a gun from the waistband of my pants. It was the gun that I had taken away from Kim Tae-hyun. “I’m quite greedy so I took this without knowing.” I put the gun back in the holster revealed by my open coat. I continued keeping an eye on Kim Tae-hyun.

“Now. Haven’t I given it back?”

“...”

“You seem to keep on misunderstanding me. Why are you so scared?”

“... Today, you keep trying to eat.” He suddenly stopped talking in honorifics. Kim Tae-hyun shot me a blazing look. “There is nothing to worry about. This is my job so I can push aside my personal feelings. But you should keep something in mind. You’re just a brat.”

“What?”

“You’re just a struggling 23 year old university student. Did I warn you about hacking? I must have been crazy.”

“Whoa.” I withdrew from Kim Tae-hyuk. Kim Tae-hyun finished talking. He took a deep breath. Then he suddenly spoke in honorifics again.

“Well then, this is the end of our business here.”

“Indeed. I hope you’re not angry anymore.”

“... Please go safely.” After those meaningful words, Kim Tae-hyun left the bathroom first. I followed behind him. In the corridor, I headed the opposite way from Kim Tae-hyun. As I headed down the emergency exit, I recalled my talk with Kim Tae-hyun.

Hacking. “Hah.” I sneered.

Hacking a virtual account? What did he think the computer engineering department taught? I honestly hadn’t thought about it until Kim Tae-hyun said it.

Well, there were the doors, and I pulled one open. I left the convention hall and pulled out the phone that I kept hidden in my sleeves as soon as I mixed in with the crowd. It was Kim Tae-hyun’s phone. I got his attention by pretending to return the gun, then I stole his phone.

Instead of trying to break the pattern lock, I looked at the side of the phone to see if there was an external memory.

“Bingo.” After pulling it out, I squeezed the phone with my hand. I put it in my pocket and continued destroying it.

Ujik.

In an instant, a ping pong ball sized piece of plastic was left in the palm of my hand. It literally went down the drain. I didn’t know if this phone was for business or personal use. If I picked well, then there would be a list of clients in the contacts that the department was responsible for.

Obviously, there would be information about the other explorers gathered at the convention centre. Who they were. What they did and where they lived. As Kim Tae-hyun said, it was an unfair game.

But so what? I had made a declaration of war. I didn’t expect everyone to be scared of me. I had to fulfill those expectations with strength.

“What happened?” Yoon Sang-gyu asked as soon as he heard the door open. Many things were omitted but the answer came back straight away.

“Ji-hee will survive for some time.” Yoon Chan-hee, Chairman Yoon Sang-gyu’s first grandchild, said. “As long as she isn’t abandoned by him.”

“Longer than you?”

“... I think it isn’t likely.” The old man turned in his chair and looked at his eldest grandchild.

“I want to hear more.” Yoon Chan-hee gave a short, concise explanation of what happened today. He spoke about what he observed from Hee-chul and what he saw in his gaze. “I see. Then how would you rate that young man?”

It was an interesting story, but he was more interested in the expressions on his grandchild’s face. “Impressive.”

“Really?”

“He is extremely capable of hiding what he is thinking. Although he hardly expresses any emotions, I get the feeling that every emotion shown is calculated.” Yoon Sang-gyu nodded silently.

“But...”

“But?”

“Despite being fully conscious of the risks, he dives in without any fear. I think that is a disadvantage.” A questioning expression appeared on Yoon Chan-hee’s face because Yoon Sang-gyu was laughing.

“What...”

“Since you were a child, I’ve heard a lot of people say the same thing about you. It is your biggest advantage. But is this the first time? You turned it into a shortcoming when evaluating someone else.”

“...” Yoon Chan-hee had nothing to say at his grandfather’s analysis.

“Besides, somehow I don’t think it is a disadvantage.”

“...”

“As a matter of fact, don’t you think so as well?” He couldn’t answer. He couldn’t say that it wasn’t the case. Was the man called Hee-chul much better than he thought? Since Hee-chul was backing his cousin Yoon Ji-hee from behind, did he really have to consider her a competitor to take control of UZ?

Or was it due to his grotesque appearance? No, that wasn’t the main reason. Yoon Chan-hee used his analytical power to come up with an answer. “... He is a little different.”

Up until now, Yoon Chan-hee had met many people. He was superior to all of them. They either respected him or were jealous of him. When he looked at it, the quality of Hee-chul’s gaze was similar to theirs. Hee-chul was a dog barking at a tree that he could

never climb.

But one thing was different. Yoon Chan-hee had assumed that Hee-chul's personality was a disadvantage. Yet Hee-chul revealed his sharp teeth. Yoon Chan-hee could feel the coolness of his fangs, despite being on the tree.

“I could tell his quality from a brief phone call.”

“You talked to him?”

“He is an interesting type. Isn’t it? If you face him and survive, then you will have learnt a lot.” Yoon Sang-gyu looked at the clock. 11:37 p.m. It would soon be time.

“Then. I’ll see you tomorrow morning.”

“Yes. Grandfather.” Yoon Chan-hee bowed and left, then he waited in his room for the dungeon. As the stairs appeared, he suddenly felt a sense of curiosity. Besides him, did the remaining six people have the same impression? The damp coolness that touched their necks?

Maybe they did. They might be confused and hesitate before stepping on the stairs. Yoon Chan-hee didn’t pray.

Maybe that was why... He encountered Hee-chul on the ninth floor.

Chapter 47 – Day 12, 9th Floor Anglerfish

I was falling.

It felt like going down a waterslide without any water. I slipped through the stone passage for a while before falling into a room.

Tak.

The distance between the ceiling and the ground was three metres. As soon as I felt like I was floating in the air, I quickly turned and landed on the ground with my feet.

My first impression of the 9th floor was the smell. It was a smell that I knew, but wasn't familiar with. It was the smell of a zoo, or a house that raised a lot of dogs or cats. However, the smell was 10 times stronger than that.

I could see that the walls were made of bricks. The floor... Reeds? It seemed as if something like straw was rolled up on the ground. I see. This place,

“Hihyat!” It was a kennel.

I turned straight away and avoided the attack. The owner of the cry literally slammed against the wall.

Kung!

There was a heavy sound and shaking as the heavy weight collided with the wall.

[Splatter Ape. Type: Primate-based. Variant. Rank C+.]

[Created by the druids of the Empire, these chimeras are for the purpose of being a weapon. It has the intelligence and strength of a primate, mixed with the violence of a reptile. They desire killing more than anything else, and they relieve their desire for violence and murder on weak prey.]

In short, it was a gorilla covered in scales. The other features were the eyes and nails. It had the yellow eyes of a reptile rather than that of a gorilla. The hands also transitioned into knife-sized fingernails.

“Hiyaya...” The gorilla shook its head before preparing to jump in again. I formed a fist. Rank C+. It was the same rank as the lizardman on the sixth floor that almost wiped out a large number of my group. Fortunately, I was lucky enough to win at that time using an item I had obtained. And now?

“Hyat!” It jumped towards me. It boldly aimed to overwhelm me with its size. The height was 2.5m. I slammed my fist into the smooth abdomen.

Bam!

It was like punching a rubber tire, but I didn't get the feeling of my fist sinking in.

The gorilla shrieked and pulled away from me. The sharp nails pierced through the clothes of my back and cut my skin slightly.
“Are you angry?”

“Hyaat!” I had seen a TV documentary about the momentary speed of reptiles. The gorilla swung its long arms at a high speed. I narrowly avoided the nails. More and more red lines appeared on my body.

It seemed like the limiting factor was the gorilla's endurance. The speed of the swinging arms slowed down and it gradually became less accurate. I immediately took advantage of it. I moved close and continuously struck the abdomen.

Bam!

After the second punch, I felt something solid breaking. The gorilla stepped back, but its stamina had already fallen so I narrowed the distance again. After repeating this two more times, the gorilla's knee was broken. There was fear and horror on the face that looked up at me. My fist struck that face.

“... Hah.” After the gorilla collapsed, I place a hand on my waist and restored my breathing. I took short breaths.

[Current Balance: 722/741]

This was the result of evading as much as possible with Limiter Release off. It would have been much quicker if I took a few risks and dived in. Although it would be more complicated if I needed to handle more than two.

“Hyaah...” As soon as I thought that, two big ones showed up in the darkness. Although my wounds weren’t deep, they licked their lips like I was tasty.

“I’m sorry.” One of them was impatient and rushed in first. “The tough experiment is over.” There was only a simple test left. I pulled back slightly and pushed my palms forward. Then I imagined the biggest explosion possible.

There was a loud roar and a flash. I couldn’t determine the exact appearance but I was certain that the gorilla had died instantly.

“...”

[Current Balance: 552/741]

I didn’t even think of lowering my palms as I looked in front of me. The straw strewn on the ground and the first corpse were on fire. In front of me were broken iron bars. The corpse of a gorilla

had crossed through the iron bar and was caught in another one down the corridor. Almost half of its torso had disappeared.

Suuk.

I turned my head at the sound of footsteps. What was that expression on the remaining gorilla's face? It was like it had seen a ghost. Maybe its instincts were saying something.

"I was surprised as well..." I muttered and raised my palms again.

"Hya... Hyaiiiik!" The gorilla turned around and ran away.

Once again, I imagined an explosion. Unlike earlier, it was a specific explosion. It wasn't unnecessarily long and thick, but there was sufficient destructive power compressed within it.

Launch.

Tang!

There was a sound similar to an exaggerated gunshot. The gorilla collapsed. I wasn't thrown back by the explosion because I had aimed for the legs.

[Current Balance: 541/741]

I approached the gorilla. The length was lacking so the explosion hadn't penetrated its thigh.

I received some damage, decreasing my health by 10 points. However, that was restored due to my blood-sucking ability. Since the first explosion had consumed 170 HP, it was a costly power that consumed a lot of my health.

"Hi... Hi... Hiii...." I brought my hand directly over its head. Since it was an instant attack that killed the gorilla, my HP rose slightly instead of decreasing. I exited through the iron bars and stepped into the corridor. The corridor was quite long. There were many rooms with iron bars on both sides, and I was in one of them. As soon as I took one step, I raised my right hand.

Tang!

A long thin blast burst out and hit the thigh of a female in the darkness.

"Kyak!"

The female screamed and fell to the ground. Based on her clothing, she wasn't a Tellan. "Take your hands off the ticket."

"..."

“Your hands need to tear it quickly. Or I will shoot this out one last time and see who is faster.” The woman’s hands left her ticket. I stepped on her torso and picked up the ticket.

“Spare me. I’ll do whatever you want.” The woman begged.

“Food.”

“...” The woman stared at me before pulling a bag from her inventory. A calorie bar and water emerged. I accepted and chewed on it. I was able to recover HP with my blood-sucking ability, but it didn’t apply to hunger.

“If you spare me...”

“Treat your injury. If I see something resembling a ticket in your hand then I will shoot your head.” I observed the woman. She was tall with good skin. The gym clothes she was dressed in seemed quite pricey. Judging by the shape of her body, she exercised for health purposes.

The woman poured a potion onto her leg. “I will submit to you if you spare me. There is also information that I know and...”

“Lead the way.” I interrupted a second time. The woman stared at my face for a moment before pulling a lantern out of her bag. Then she started walking down the corridor. I stared at the light from the lantern as I moved after her.

“Your party?”

“Party...?” The friends I ran around with broke up on the eighth floor... I’m not sure but we fell separately... That’s why I reflexively attacked you...”

I was prepared to a certain extent. On the eighth floor, Yang Su-jin and Yoon Ji-hee didn’t descend normally through the stairs. They were automatically bounced after I occupied the area.

Then were they sent to the forest staircases? But after the forest was integrated into Talia, all the stairs had faded away. I was forced to use the staircase in the centre of Talia. Maybe both of them were on this floor but I hadn’t met them yet, or maybe they had gone to another floor. They might not be able to reach the next floor unharmed.

“You... What is your name? I... I am Jang Yoon-mi.”

“You don’t need to know.” After leaving the corridor, there were railings and paths leading to the left and right. Before I picked the way, I turned and carefully examined the walls on both sides of the entrance to the corridor.

Rather than a pigpen, it seemed to be a fully-equipped facility. A type of facility like this would always have a map at each intersection.

“Ah! Map...” Jang Yoon-mi cried out. I looked in the direct that

Jang Yoon-mi indicated and studied the map.

The kennel was here. Breeding Room and 1~3 Research Centres. There were personal offices and housing for people of various positions. A dining room. There was also a Cryopreservation and Incubation Room.

“You can read the words... Incredible.”

“What do you think?”

“Huh?” I could see Jang Yoon-mi’s surprised face due to the lantern light. She didn’t know what I was asking.

“Where do you think we should go to?”

“... Ah. I-I guess... There is the place called the Cryopreservation and Incubation Room...”

“Indeed.”

“There might be something like an egg that can be raised as a pet... Hoho. Is that too much like a game?’

“No. It sounds reasonable.” I nodded. A slightly touched expression appeared on Jang Yoon-mi at my words.

“My name is Kim Hee-chul. Use it comfortably.”

“Ah. Hee-chul... I see. Then will we go to that place?”

“Exactly.”

“I’m looking forward to it! If eggs are found there...” I glanced over her shoulder as she spoke.

“What is that?!” As I raised my voice, Jang Yoon-mi stopped with surprised and turned around. But she also stopped in her tracks.

“Eh?”

It might be because there was nobody behind her. Or maybe it was due to my palms touching her back.

“I will eat well.” I said. Anyway, I triggered... No, there was an explosion.

I gained one more piece of information. If I fired an explosion in close proximity, there wouldn’t be a noise. I immediately searched the body.

Excluding the potions, Jang Yoon-mi’s equipment were just C and D rank garbage. I took all her tickets. I didn’t have any money left so I collected all of hers. The contents of her bag were food, water and a small English textbook. There were also a dozen

fluorescent rods used for structural changes. In addition, one radio set to a certain frequency.

Yes. She separated from her group upstairs? Her belongings didn't seem to say that. This woman belonged to someone else, and the leader was a pretty smart person. I turned on the radio. I waited a bit but I didn't hear anything.

Even though a radio was handy, it wouldn't be comfortable to use it carelessly in the dungeon environment. In addition, there was likely to be a password so the possibility of being caught was high.

I picked up the lantern. It was a pretty good item. Of course, I would normally never use something like this. Even if it allowed a clear view, carrying it around in the dungeon was like advertising my position. It would be a different story if I was asking for rescue or actively looking for enemies.

I cut off Jang Yoon-mi's finger and turned on the lantern. I had grasped the path while Jang Yoon-mi was using the lantern. I had listened attentively while she was making a fuss. I waved the bait as I headed to the Cryopreservation and Incubation Room.

I was like an anglerfish waving its lantern in the deep ocean.

Chapter 48 – Day 12, 9th Floor Egg

“This... Jackpot. We seem to have found it!”

Their current location was the research centre. It was a personal work and office space for the senior researchers of this facility, the druids.

“I look forward to seeing what it looks like. Leader-nim.” Yoon Chan-hee’s right hand man, Chang Ga-ram said in an excited voice. They found the clue much faster than expected.

“...” Instead of expressing joy, Yoon Chan-hee read the parchment once more. He wasn’t specifically pleased. He just wanted to confirm the existence of an item.

“Check to see if any additional people have joined.”

“Yes!”

Yoon Chan-hee looked at a map of the facility on one side of the laboratory. Manual creation was his forte. His followers weren’t just trained in the dungeon, but also in reality. It was thanks to that training that he was able to grasp this floor easily.

In a situation where their field of view was limited, the first thing to do was use the luminous stick to display their location. In this way, those who followed Yoon Chan-hee could easily meet up again. The teamwork enabled them to avoid the gorillas,

overthrow other explorers and join up with Yoon Chan-hee's team.

With the people who joined Yoon Chan-hee, he was able to grasp most of the stairs in a few hours. There seemed to be no one strong, including 'kings', on the ninth floor. At best, there were those who alternated between using the tickets and running towards the stairs on the seventh and eighth floors.

As more subordinates joined and reported the place where they started, Yoon Chan-hee was able to grasp half of the dungeon. There were no other large forces apart from his group. This conclusion led him to a slow, stable search instead of a drastic exploration. The result was the item in his hands. It contained the work that the researchers of this facility were pursuing. It was a report on the finished product.

"There seems to be no additional members." Chang Ga-ram said as he returned to the laboratory.

"It has been quite a long time... Something must have happened to the six people."

"Jang Yoon-mi. Lee Tae-hoon. Kwak Chang-sung. Yeom Chang-jin. Oh Jin-soo..." Their dead bodies hadn't been found yet. Maybe they were in the part of the map that Yoon Chan-hee hadn't explored yet. It was the passage leading to the hatchery and third feeding room in the west.

"Even so... Do you think there is something more risky in the core of this facility? Certainly, the monsters on this floor are

different from the previous ones.” Chang Ga-ram glanced at his left arm that was still recovering. If it wasn’t for the potions, then his arm wouldn’t be healing after a one-on-one fight against a gorilla near the starting point.

He was someone who trained to fight against four people, so he was able to suppress one gorilla. Of course, that had happened when Yoon Chan-hee wasn’t around. “In addition, Leader-nim wasn’t with them...”

Yoon Chan-hee had met three subordinates immediately near the start. They were subordinates who didn’t excel in combat. He used them to hunt an equal number of gorillas.

“We’re ready, so we’ll go when you give the word.”

“Do it.” Chang Ga-ram left and Yoon Chan-hee looked at the map again. Chang Ga-ram’s hypothesis made sense. The hatching facilities were at the core of this facility. Something there might have killed the six people.

‘But would such a key area be set as the starting point for explorers?’

That wasn’t the dungeon that he knew. If he didn’t have a key then he couldn’t hatch ‘it’, and he wouldn’t have received the clue if he started there.

“Let’s go.”

“Yes!” The 19 people in his group moved in unison at his instructions. They followed Yoon Chan-hee’s instructions with no complaints or hesitation.

“They appeared!”

“11 o’clock!”

A group of five gorillas attacked them in the central hall. His subordinates carried out the tasks assigned to them with amazing organizational power.

[Unique Talent – No.55 Management.]

It was the ability to detect the abilities of others as well as situations where those abilities could be used properly, dramatically improving the talents and abilities of those in his group. Yoon Chan-hee didn’t care about the battle.

It was a policy that he created himself. He knew there would be no losses as long as they followed his orders correctly. He just stared down at the parchment as his subordinates got into a formation. It was the journal of the senior researcher who once managed this place.

[The sowing stage had no difficulties. Lowering intelligence and forming obedience to humans has succeeded. It seems like the desire to tame the sacred beast will come true.]

[An unexpected problem occurred. Even though digestive organs were formed, its nutrition is done solely through an energy transfer from the divinity. All other nutritional supplements have failed. All specimens have died of starvation.]

[A Malon priest came up with the idea. What if we directly supply the energy that is the basis of divine power, not actual divine power? Human desire.]

[No 115. has showed improvement. A parasitic object in the host has been created. There is just one problem. Only one person can be a host. With the desires of just one individual as a driving force, it will be difficult to extract the full performance of the sacred creature. At best, it will just be a common beast... It seems necessary to improve it even further.]

[The improvement of No. 175 has failed. There has been no progress in the last 15 attempts. The sacred creature doesn't follow any instructions except for those that come from the one who has become the host. It is impossible to even control who will become the host. The larvae instinctively detects the best host around it. Once the host has been chosen, the parasite will begin synchronization and will take a form that reflects the host.]

[The plan is terminated. All of this was an impossible

experiment... Fortunately, the Emperor seems interested. He thinks of it as a special pet. I've decided to prepare one fertilized egg as a present. If I am lucky then I might be able to recoup my budget. I will prepare one with the best traits...]

The journal ended there. The egg in the incubation room was probably the sacred creature. His personality wasn't the type to go crazy over something like this. But this time, Yoon Chan-hee's heart beat a little faster. It was for a practical reason rather than emotional.

It was a sacred creature for someone called the Emperor, so he could see the advantage of becoming the master of a creature like that. "The suppression has been completed. There are no injuries." Yoon Chan-hee nodded as he heard Chang Ga-ram's report.

The gorillas had already disappeared from his interests. He wanted to get his hands on the sacred creature. At this moment, it was the only thing that attracted his attention.

I knew why gorillas weren't seen here. It was cold. Really f*cking cold.

[Current Balance: 722/741. A cold state. Health will be reduced by three points per second.]

[Current Balance: 719/741. A cold state. Health will be reduced by three points per second.]

Disable. After getting rid of the patterns on my hands, the ‘cold state’ disappeared. Due to the penalty of the inscribed patterns, I was weaker to the cold when it was activated. Apart from that, I also had the cold penalty from the Salamander and Lizardman Essence.

My body was weak to the cold, but the place itself was some type of frozen storehouse. Display cabinets filled the space. Beyond the frosted and translucent glass, ‘eggs’ of various sizes and shapes were frozen. Sometimes instead of the eggs, there was a green liquid with a fetal life-form floating around.

Every time I looked at one, an explanation of the creature popped up. Perhaps it would take me a whole two days to see all of them in here.

Maybe this was the ‘reward’ of the stairs. Just like the Kasava in the forest, some of the frozen creatures could be used as livestock or resources in my city.

I looked at the floor and the ceiling. There were pipes stretching from the cabinets and along the walls. The longer I followed it, the warmer it became. As I entered a space at the end of the incubation room, it was so warm that I didn’t need a hot pack.

Instead of a wall of shelves, it contained something else. The

pipes were gathering towards a device. It was a rectangular device, similar to Talia's generator. The letters on the device said it was a machine that used geothermal heat.

I moved away from the generator and stopped in front of a device that reached my waist. It looked like the World Cup trophy. The shape was a pedestal that supported a sphere. The sphere was the size of a soccer ball and seemed like it was made out of amber. There was something inside it. The fuel...

Duguen!

“...!” It sounded like a big drum was ringing through the space. I stepped back. I could clearly feel it. I felt the vibration on my skin. The ringing sound came from that little ball.

[◆◆◆'s Egg. Type: Pending Rank ???.]

[The egg of an artificially synthesized beast. It was an object to be presented to the Emperor of the Bondi Empire, but ultimately didn't meet its scheduled master. It still doesn't have a form or any abilities. In order to break it out of the shell, it is necessary to remove the pressure that is maintaining the surface of the egg.]

Duong.

The surface of the egg ran unceasingly while I was reading the words. A dim shape seemed to be swimming inside it.

Duong!

“Hey... Wait a minute.” It felt like the egg would crack at any moment, but the surface still seemed fine. The pedestal of the egg was connected to the generator through a pipe. On one side of the generator was a control panel with levers and buttons. I focused on deciphering the structure.

There was no liquid crystal, but there were stones piled up on one side like an abacus.

Perhaps... The incubation room was basically in a cold state. There was the word ‘heat’ next to the numbers, so it seemed like the generator could be used to get rid of the cold.

Right now, almost all that heat energy was concentrated on the egg. I got a sense of the operation but trying to move the levers.

[Key: ‘Master Druid’s Master Key’ is required.]

I immediately imagined the office area that I saw on the map of the facility.

1. Get the key from there.
2. Operate the generator here to awaken the egg.
3. This would power up the rest of the facility.

An image of the ninth floor was immediately drawn. Unfortunately, I couldn't leisurely take the time to do this process.

Chobeok.

Footsteps were heard from far away. It wasn't just one. There were at least ten. Those guys.

Apart from the very first woman I killed, I encountered a total of six people who brought lanterns. After killing and checking their belongings, they had the same configuration of items as the woman. Even though I moved across a fairly large area, six of the seven people I encountered were all under the same leader. The meaning was clear.

That leader would be the only obstacle on this floor. It was likely that he had gathered all his companions together and come here. This meant he also found some clues.

The rules were simple. Attack and defend. Those people had found the key and were searching for answers here. I had to stop them.

"...Here..." A person's voice was heard. I had memorized the

location of the nearest staircase just in case of an emergency, so I immediately acted.

Darkness Cloud. Activate.

“What is this...?” I didn’t fear the number of footsteps and boldly ran forward.

If they didn’t have an item similar to my pendant of magnification, then they would see me when I was within one metre. In other words, if I attacked with Darkness Cloud activated then they wouldn’t be able to see me.

I could see the people at the front on the edge of my vision. I activated the patterns on my hands, causing the cold air to hurt my skin. I raised my palms and caused a long range explosion.

Tatang!

“Ack!” The first one was down. I was confident after receiving a small amount of experience.

The same was true of their colleagues that I had already killed, but these people didn’t have good specs. The experience I received wasn’t properly distributed and was basically trash. I aimed another explosion at them. Within seconds, a second person was screaming.

Deadly attacks coming from darkness would deal a mental blow.

This alone would cause their morale to fall significantly. They weren't trained soldiers, so it was a natural response from a human.

But... “5 o'clock. Lantern.” I heard a loud voice outside of my field of view. And at that moment...

Pahat!

The reaction could be described as almost simultaneous. All the lantern lights aimed for this side and completely removed the darkness. The dozen or so lights didn't overlap at all. It took away all the darkness around me.

Of course, the lanterns couldn't lift the Darkness Cloud but... “T- There is a strange lump!” A black chunk in the bright space would definitely be the most obvious target.

“C. Flare.” The voice was heard again. Some of the lantern lights diminished, then several flares burst in unison from different directions.

Soon, almost all the lanterns were turned off but half of the cooling room was lit by the red lights of the flares. I lifted Darkness Cloud and looked at the owner of the voice who had given brief instructions.

At that moment, I could finally see him well.

“Kim Hee-chul.”

“Yoon Chan-hee.” I reached out. It was a blast that precisely targeted Yoon Chan-hee.

Tang!

But the explosion stopped a little ahead of the target point. A big man stood in front of Yoon Chan-hee.

“Ohh!”

He raised his arms in a X shape and blocked the explosion, letting out a loud groan of pain as he did so. But even though there were burns, the man’s arms were fine.

Was it a body hardening technique? I had seen something similar on the sixth floor... Was it strong enough to stop my explosion?

It wasn’t just him. In the meantime, two other people had positioned themselves in front of Yoon Chan-hee. One was holding a shield. The other one was wearing thin metal armor. Although they had different characteristics, they took the same action in unison.

Tang! Tang!

I fired two explosions as a test. Although it felt overwhelming,

the two explosions didn't pierce through. There was also no noticeable reduction in the HP Bar above their heads.

"You said it during the day." A voice was heard from behind the wall of three people. "It would be safer to go down the stairs."

"I can say it again if you want to hear it once more." I responded casually while searching for an appropriate answer.

1. Instantly turn to the side and aim at the people behind the wall.
2. Using a maximum output explosion at the wall in front.

"No. I think you will be the one to listen this time."

"..."

I made a decision. Number two. No matter how solid they were, I had even managed to blow a hole through the gorillas. I put forward one hand and imagined an explosion that was as large as possible...

Jjeok.

A sharp sensation struck my left thigh.

[Current Balance: 432/741. Frostbite. Health will be reduced by 12 points per second.]

Frost was stuck to the entire left side of my body. Icicles the size of a child's hand were stuck to my left thigh and side.

Jjejeok!

I destroyed the next icicles coming from the same direction.

It was coming from a direction that wasn't brightened by the flares. The direction was from the entrance to the incubator. The flares were in the 9 o'clock and 10 o'clock direction from me, causing a very narrow gap that the light from the flares couldn't reach.

I knew this but... I hadn't thought about it. It meant that part was deliberately darkened. I wasn't the only one who used the technique of having a conversation to buy time and earn attention.

"I've heard a lot of rumours about you." A man in his mid-20s walked out of the darkness.

He had been walking slightly behind the party from the beginning. "Nice to meet you, I am Chang Ga-ram." The man waved his hands and pieces of ice were created in the air and flew towards me. Was it magic that deal with ice, similar to Yoon Ji-hee's wind magic?

[Current Balance: 362/741. Frostbite. Health will be reduced by 12 points per second.]

“...!” A ridiculous amount of my health was reduced. I needed to somehow supplement my health with blood-sucking. I leapt through the ice and aimed my palm towards the crowd around Yoon Chan-hee.

Tang!

“Ugh!” Although my health was reduced by more than half, that health was almost instantly restored. The distance was much wider compared to when I was facing the gorilla, so the damage was smaller, but the person I hit had lower health than the gorillas.

As a result, there was damage. Various arrows were fired from behind the shield and the projectiles hit my body.

[Current Balance: 329/741. Frostbite. Poison. Health will decrease by 17 points per second.]

Very good. I avoided the barrage of ice and arrows and threw my body behind the nearest shelf.

[Current Balance: 262/741. Frostbite. Health will decrease by 21 points per second.]

Once again, a large amount of health was reduced, probably due to my weak cold resistance. However, if I turned off the patterns then it was as good as being unarmed. My fist had less power than the explosion and I wouldn't even be able to hit anyone.

I took out the potion received from Kim Tae-hyun. But it just changed the 21 decrease in health to zero. The amount and type of recovery depended on how much was drunk.

I couldn't help laughing. Properly. These guys acted really properly. I imagined that it would be difficult to deal with an organized group, but to think my first opponents turned out like this. If I wasn't alone then things might be different. Even just one more person could distract or attack from the other side.

I wanted to see her. Su-jin. Really.

"There is a staircase near the entrance to the hatchery." Yoon Chan-hee's voice was heard from beyond the shelf. "If you somehow make it down there, then you won't die." There wasn't any sarcasm in his voice.

Yet it was clear. "It wouldn't be so bad to give it a try. Isn't your specialty carrying out risks?"

... Did this bastard have bad feelings towards me? I could definitely feel those emotions. It was a declaration of war.

"I've received orders to keep you alive until he gets back from the work." Chang Ga-ram said as there was the sound of walking. Yoon Chan-hee was going inside the incubation room.

Of course, it wasn't that he didn't care about me. He knew that the explosions from my hand were powerful. He would just maintain the state of confrontation without taking any risks. It was until Yoon Chan-hee came back from the incubation room.

Jjejeok.

As the temperature around me fell, frost started to form. It was due to Chang Ga-ram doing something.

[Current Balance: 276/741. Frostbite. Poison will decrease health by 3 points per second.]

"...Dammit." Despite the effect of the medicine, my health was being reduced again. My eyes gradually closed as I became drowsy.

"Honestly, it is the first time I have seen you myself. Based on the stories, you seemed really great." Chang Ga-ram's voice came closer. "But not anymore. No matter how good a person is... The height that you can climb is fixed. Someday, you will meet a rock

and will surely break.”

A taunt. If I left this place then there would be projectiles and icicles that would turn me into a beehive. It couldn’t be solved using Darkness Cloud since they would just aim at the darkness.

“No matter how hard you try, an egg can’t break a rock.” Chang Ga-ram continued.

“I see.” I answered in order to try and maintain consciousness.

“Indeed. But honestly, you already know that. You must have felt like this all along, before briefly living a happy dream inside this dungeon.”

[Current Balance: 193/741. Frostbite. Poison will decrease health by 6 points per second.]

It was becoming cold. My eyes closed. I wasn’t sleepy, but it felt like I was. The helplessness I felt before entering the dungeon. The feeling of not being able to do anything further due to the circumstances...

“Just go back to that life...”

... Close my eyes as the cold,

“... See.”

“Huh? What?”

“Ah. You jerk.” I raised my nails to my forehead.

I scratched down using all my strength. The half-frozen skin was torn. Now I regained some consciousness. I opened my eyes. I no longer felt sleepy. Come to think of it.

“That bastard is a bit younger than I am...”

“Yes. People are prideful about age. Aren’t you?”

“... Well, it doesn’t matter as long as I can eat you.” I knew I didn’t have much time. I couldn’t see the answer. The only thing I had done was stop myself from falling asleep.

So... Somehow. In order to win. I moved my feet.

It was starving. Originally, it should have emerged from the egg a long time ago. The egg shell was the best environment where it could live almost semi-permanently...

The hunger didn’t just come from hunger. It wanted to taste. The

sweetness that it had never experienced before.

Duong!

The tiny body shook as it heard sounds nearby. How long had it been? There were things to eat nearby! If only there wasn't this eggshell suppressing it. It wanted to taste straight away. There were more than a dozen delicious tastes, but there was a special flavour among them.

It wanted to eat. It was an instinct even before the ego was formed. And it waited. The shell broke.

[The conditions are met.]

[Talent Awareness.]

[Unique Talent – No.99 Underdog.]

Chapter 49 – Day 12, 9th Floor Sacred Creature

It was like before the birth of a wolf. Let's look at the situation a few minutes before the Underdog Talent was fully realized.

A cold that caused the body to freeze.

The fear of death and losing everything.

Chang Ga-ram's taunt that scratched at the nerves.

The waking of the beast that had been sleeping.

It was none of the above causes.

“Hah.” My exhaled breath froze in the air.

It couldn't be helped. I had to give this up. I cancelled the inscriptions.

[Current Balance: 166/741. A cold state. Poisoned.]

[Current Balance: 192/741. A cold state. Poisoned.]

As soon as I gave up the patterns on both hands, ‘frostbite’ turned into ‘cold.’ My health stopped being reduced and started to gradually go up due to the potion. The 60% effect of weakening in the cold stopped having an impact on my health. The weight on my eyelids was also much lighter.

[Current Balance: 216/741. A cold state. Poisoned.]

But the problem was still the same.

“You have nothing left to say. Are your hands and feet paralyzed?” Chang Ga-ram asked.

I wasn’t paralyzed. I was still feeling fine, but I was stiff. My fingers and toes, elbows and knee joints, shoulders and waist. Every time I moved, it felt like I was frozen. It was similar to the state when I first attacked Yoon Chan-hee’s party with the explosions. In the meantime, Chang Ga-ram was decreasing the temperature in here.

It was unreasonable to move out from behind the shelf in this state. Although I didn’t know about the projectiles, the speed of the icicles wasn’t slow. I wouldn’t be able to completely avoid them. Furthermore, I was bound to suffer even more after giving up the inscriptions and moving to a close combat situation.

I checked the essences.

[Essence – Rock Lizardman. As long as the owner ‘grips’ it, muscle strength +2. Increases HP regeneration by 100%. The rate of restoration will dramatically increased against injuries such as burns. There is a slight decrease in the basal metabolic rate of the body.]

[Immune against various heat sensing abilities.]

[Body’s resistance to cold is decreased. You have become 50% more vulnerable to cold air.]

[Essence – Elder Salamander. The ‘Fire Lizard’s Mark’ will be inscribed on both hands. It is possible to switch it from an active/inactive state through a command. Fire and heat resistance increase by 25%. This won’t turn off as long as your HP doesn’t fall below one.]

[The average body temperature will rise by one degree. There is no physical deterioration caused by high body temperature.]

[You have become 15% more vulnerable to cold air.]

I could remove the lizardman and salamander essences to reduce the cold resistance penalties that they gave me. However... Maybe that wasn't the answer. Rather than 100 points, I thought about something that would give 50~60 points.

I pulled out a bag from my inventory. There were tin cans that I brought in order to help with the cold. Of course, it was an item I purchased in reality for a wood fire. I never thought they would be used for this purpose.

Slide.

I opened the lid of the can.

Jeurereuk.

Then I poured the kerosene over my head. The smell of a gas station caused my nose to ache.

“What is this smell...?”

I didn't have time to prepare.

[Current Balance: 356/741. A cold state. Poisoned.]

Half of my health had recovered. After waiting for my strength to

come back, I placed a hand on my chest.

Slide.

I slide my finger against the lighter and a flame touched my skin.

Hwakak!

The flames instantly skyrocketed.

[Current Balance: 364/741. Burning. Poisoned.]

[Current Balance: 366/741. Burning. Poisoned.]

[Current Balance: 369/741. Burning. Poisoned.]

My HP was increasing rather than decreasing.

[Increases HP regeneration by 100%. The rate of restoration will dramatically increased against injuries such as burns.]

[Fire and heat resistance have increased by 25%. This won't turn off as long as your HP doesn't fall below one.]

The effect of the potion and regeneration synergized with each other, causing my skin to repeatedly recover from the burns. It wasn't just my skin that was repeatedly being burnt and restored. A huge amount of heat penetrated my skin and entered my nervous system.

[Pain Tolerance Lv9. 36799/51200]

It wasn't just my skin being regenerated. My nervous system was screaming out from the abuse that continued without the possibility of death.

Yes. Scream. I screamed so that people could hear me.

“It looks like a fire but how long can you last...”

I jumped over the shelf.

“...!” The eyes that confirmed the identity of the burning ‘wood’ were astonished. The distance between me and Chang Ga-ram was around five meters. He turned his way and extended both palms. Surprisingly, his reaction speed was still fast.

Jjejeok.

Icicles flew along the trajectory of his hand and flew towards me. The moment I landed on the ground, I spun one foot in order to avoid the attack. Victory was possible if I was in this state. I could certainly avoid the icicles.

Chang Ga-ram also moved, dodging back diagonally as he shot the icicles. They flew in a straight line. Instead of chasing after him using the shortest distance, I slipped sideways.

“...Ugh.” Even though none of them had hit yet, a groan emerged from Chang Ga-ram’s mouth. He had finally realized it.

When the first icicle hit... Yoon Chan-hee and Chang Ga-ram had maintained an angle of 60 degrees around my position. But it was a little different now. In order to freeze me as I hid behind the shelf, Chang Ga-ram’s position was in a line between the shelf and the group behind him.

As long as I avoided the icicles, I could approach while maintaining this positioning, even if it was slow. His companions were right behind him. As I moved closer, the more icicles that Chang Ga-ram fired at random. They scratched against my sides and forearms.

But it was different from earlier. The frost wasn’t established at all. They were more like thick needles than icicles.

“E-Everybody spread out!” The stuttering cry popped out as the distance between us narrowed. It was different. The followers of the orders were the same, but there was no one with a extremely fast and sober mind like Yoon Chan-hee.

The distance was too narrow for people to completely follow Chang Ga-ram’s order. I triggered Darkness Cloud. There was a mass of darkness that was a few meters in diameter. However, Chang Ga-ram had already seen this technique once and was aware of its weakness. He aimed for the center of the darkness where my head and chest were, shooting five large icicles.

The Darkness Cloud moved around me. Aiming for the middle was right, but the height was wrong. It went straight through the air. The moment I activated the Darkness Cloud, I had slid to the ground. As I narrowed the distance, I took actions to avoid falling while stooping down. I aimed from below.

I felt something cold passing over my head. After the sliding tackle, I firmly pushed against the ground with my hand. My body rose up and I threw a kick.

Jjejeok!

Thick walls of ice were covering Chang Ga-ram’s face and body. I didn’t know if I could penetrate through them, but that wasn’t my aim from the beginning.

Bakak!

My kick successfully hit his right shoulder. Chang Ga-ram's upper right torso was pushed back.

[Current Balance: 439/741. Burning. Poisoned.]

Around 35 health was returned due to blood-sucking. The subsequent kick hit his left hand, that he had subconsciously raised to block to body. This time, 27 HP was received. Chang Ga-ram's body couldn't overcome the impact of the kick and jerked to the right. I didn't kill him, but now Chang Ga-ram couldn't completely use his two hands.

Teong!

Chang Ga-ram's body rolled several times on the floor, and was still completely covered in ice. However, it wasn't a form of armor. Inside the mass of ice, Chang Ga-ram with disabled arms could be seen. It was like a type of airbag. I flew straight towards the mass of ice. It was to use it rather than break it.

Tang!

Teteng!

The various arrows aimed at me hit the lump of ice instead. The other people kept attacking despite hitting Chang Ga-ram. They knew his strength. In fact, despite the numerous attacks striking

against the surface, the ice showed no signs of damage. I tested out how hard the ice was.

Tong!

Jjeok. A fist-shaped mark appeared, but it was only on the surface of the thick ice. The ice also affected my hand.

If I swung my fist constantly then I would be able to break it, but... The problem was the lack of time. It had already been a few minutes since Yoon Chan-hee left the party. I needed to clean up this situation as quickly as possible and then stop Yoon Chan-hee.

If I couldn't... At the very least, I could eliminate his weapons.

Not all the people over there would have the same defensive skills as this chunk of ice. I took out another can from my inventory. My body, where the flames had almost subsided, once again became covered with oil.

Hwakak!

I was now familiar with this sensation as I walked towards the ice cube.

“Let’s finish this quickly.” I declared.

A BBQ party.

It could clearly feel it. The pressure on the eggshell was gradually weakening.

Duong. Duong. Duong.

It was finally going to be able to get out. Its beating became more vigorous than before. The larva, trapped in the egg, pulsed.

“Yes. Wait a bit more.” Yoon Chan-hee was surprised at the vibrations coming from the small egg as he manipulated the levers of the generator. It took a little time to learn, but he quickly recognized the levers that controlled the egg.

Buuuong.

The generator quickly recovered its power. The pressure on the egg lifted, revealing a light green colour instead of the amber.

Duong!

There was one last beating.

Rattle.

Fluid emerged through a crack in the egg. It extended its head. It

took its first breath. The thing that emerged from the egg looked like a caterpillar.

“...” Yoon Chan-hee stood in front of it. At first glance, it looked disgusting, but it would eventually take a form suited for its master.

“Come.” Yoon Chan-hee opened his arms to it.

Saeek!

It jumped like a bullet from the egg and into Yoon Chan-hee’s body. This person had been hoping for a partner, it could clearly feel his emotions from a distance. Above all, he was a master with a solid and stable desire.

Like a cub held by its mother, the larva melted into Yoon Chan-hee’s skin. Yes, to the sacred creature, Yoon Chan-hee was... “I am your master.”

He was the best prey.

Duong!

“...Uh?” The ringing sound spread from his chest to his head. A stupid moan emerged from Yoon Chan-hee’s mouth. “Ah... U...”

The sacred creature was to be delivered to the emperor. The

journal cut off there. There was one egg in the hatchery. Yoon Chan-hee wasn't rash. Hee-chul had probably made the same judgement. It was clear that the egg was to be delivered to the emperor.

But that was the end of the journal. Still, it was 'before completion.'

The researchers wanted to create a sacred creature suitable for the emperor. It would contain superior traits that would be qualitatively different from the previous experiments. The result was a failure.

The nature of livestock was to be dependent on humans and submit to them. The work of erasing the realization that there were beings higher than humans didn't succeed. It recognized that the human wasn't its master, but its food supply. They were just food itself.

"Ah... Ahhhh!" Yoon Chan-hee's image of the world was devastated.

His desires and willpower were being sucked out by the sacred creature. The feelings that it had never once experienced in its life. The feelings of defeat, despair, humiliation and inferiority inside Yoon Chan-hee's head.

Of course it was irresistible. However, this was his mind. Yoon Chan-hee focused his mind. 'You. Get out of my head right now.' But the sacred creature didn't listen.

‘Shut up.’

“... Euh.”

It wasn’t a matter of mental power. Even if the world was different, Yoon Chan-hee was a human. His opponent was the fragment of a god. It was also a monster that had superior traits combined with magic.

The larva, who had already tasted desires, didn’t stop eating. Yoon Chan-hee put up a good fight. But just as a child succumbed to their parents, he lost control of his legs. He sank to the ground and urinated.

Within a short time, the sacred creature had completely made Yoon Chan-hee’s mind its perfect meal. It wasn’t enough. It wasn’t a problem of quantity. It had been starving for too long. It wanted to absorb more diverse foods.

Suuuuoh.

The sacred creature left Yoon Chan-hee’s body. ‘That’ had already succumbed to the sacred creature. But it wasn’t the end of the delicious food. There was one food nearby that seemed absolutely tasty...

Chobeok.

The sacred creature was attracted by the desires it felt, not the footsteps.

“What is this?” He breathed out. Hee-chul, whose body was in a mess due to the fire, stared at the bug in front of him.

Chapter 50 – Day 12, 9th Floor Dog

“Really... A creepy bug.”

The human who came in a while ago. The sacred created had a taste. It was a type of flavour? It felt perky from devouring Yoon Chan-hee just a moment ago. No, it was more than that.

This person tasted ‘rough.’ An unrefined, raw material. A tree that had a stem but hadn’t yet found the direction to grow in. Well, the sacred creature didn’t dwell on the details of the delicious meal. It had just eaten the most delicious thing and now the second tastiest had come to it.

Hee-chul took a fighting stance. The sacred creature that devoured Yoon Chan-hee was the size of three adult men. He judged it to be a physical opponent and was ready to fight.

The sacred creature rushed straight forward. Hee-chul raised his fist and shouted. “...!” However, the sacred creature didn’t have a solid form and Hee-chul’s fist hit the air. Soon the sacred creature penetrated him.

There was an image of another world as hell began.

“...Heok! Heok!” Chang Ga-ram sighed with relief as the ice fell down. “Heok...”

His arms were a mess from just two kicks. He endured the pain and looked around. The life span of the flares scattered around was almost over. It wasn't hard to see the devastation. Other than him, everyone else was dead.

"Nonsense... No..." Chang Ga-ram was in a panicked state as he headed towards the hatchery. Hee-chul had clearly headed to the place where Yoon Chan-hee was. 'Leader-nim... If he is caught...'

It wasn't just the loss of lives. It was all the possibilities that Yoon Chan-hee had.

He greatly improved the amount of experienced gained by guiding a person's propensities and talents. Research had already been done on the differences in experience gain according to the 'quality' of the individuals. Yoon Chan-hee was the conductor who moved his subordinates.

Now this bastard had driven Chang Ga-ram to the edge of death. Yoon Chan-hee clearly believed that Chang Ga-ram's power alone could solve the problem. Chang Ga-ram didn't fulfill his responsibilities.

It was over. Close to 20 potentials had disappeared.

He didn't seem to realize that both arms were broken as he moved his feet. Somehow, he needed to help Yoon Chan-hee. He wanted to apologize. "...Leader-nim?"

At that moment, he saw Yoon Chan-hee on the opposite side of him. For a moment, Chang Ga-ram didn't think it was Yoon Chan-hee. The person in front of Chang Ga-ram was strange. There was no focus in his eyes and saliva was dripping from his mouth.

“I-I’m really sorry. Leader-nim! I...”

“Go.”

“...Huh?”

Yoon Chan-hee staggered but Chang Ga-ram barely kept him upright with his injured arms. The generator could be seen over Yoon Chan-hee's shoulder.

“...!” Kim Hee-chul had collapsed in front of the generator and was experiencing spasms. He was still alive. “L-Leader-nim. This...”

He didn't understand what was happening on the other side, but his body shook like he had wandered into a nightmare. However, the certain thing was that Yoon Chan-hee was in front of him while Kim Hee-chul was acting like that. They would be able to kill him. If Yoon Chan-hee could kill him then he would recover from the damage he suffered...

“L-Let’s go!”

“...!?”

Yoon Chan-hee shivered. Once again, Chang Ga-ram was forced to doubt that the person in front of him was truly Yoon Chan-hee. He was always a calm and cool guy. A strong person who wasn't confused no matter what he encountered and always found the best solution.

“What... I know what you are thinking...”

There was only fear. Just like a dog in a fight, Yoon Chan-hee's only choice was to succumb to it.

“B-But he... Kill...” Yoon Chan-hee looked back. The fear in his eyes was enhanced as he saw Hee-chul.

“Something will come out.”

“If we...”

“No, you can't... I refuse. It is impossible. So... We have to go. Go. Go. Huh? Let's go. Please.”

Chang Ga-ram got goose bumps. He would dismiss it as nonsense, but Yoon Chan-hee was like an idol to him. That idol was now looking like this. It seemed like he had completely lost the thing that made him shine. Chang Ga-ram didn't know what the enemy was, but he couldn't afford to handle it.

“...I understand.” Chang Ga-ram lifted Yoon Chan-hee. He turned around in order to leave the incubation room.

“...” However, he looked back at Kim Hee-chul one last time. Yoon Chan-hee must have experienced something like this. The spasms on the ground looked really painful.

It wasn’t a situation for Chang Ga-ram to worry about Hee-chul, let alone feel sympathy.

I held my neck. “Keo...” A moan emerged from my mouth but the pain wasn’t physical. My real body was lying on the ground.

Was this a dream? Or was it my imagination? I was back in my original body. It wasn’t the strong body from the dungeon, but a weak desk-bound body. The reason why I couldn’t move my body was the worm clinging to my neck.

–It is easier if you give up.

–It will happen regardless of what you do.

–I want more.

It wasn’t my words that were constantly echoing, but the worm’s. The worm kept talking to me. The voice imitated me, causing an irritating sensation. It was just like what I felt just

before freezing to death due to Chang Ga-ram. That helplessness that bothered me all my life until I entered here.

I closed my eyes tightly.

It was a dream mouth, but I bit my lip so hard that it bled. Somehow, I needed to do something to get this worm off me. Although the pain was effective, the pressure only weakened for a short while.

Bam!

Strong hands grabbed my head and slammed it into the ground. Images of several people protruded from the head of the worm. They were people who I knew. The shape that suppressed my head was my father's.

-I told you to stop.

-People should know when to give up.

My father's voice sounded normal, but all the power drained from my body. I was a child again. In my childhood, I was a child who had to follow the voice of my parents, who had absolute power over me.

-You can't get everything you want in life.

-Isn't this selfish?

This time, it was my mother's voice. Another hand touched my neck.

-Hey. Is anyone out there? Everyone is preparing for private tutoring. Do you have money to prepare for the contest?

-I know you worked hard, but these are the results.

There were my teachers from middle school, high school and university. In addition, some school sunbaes and employers. In my life, there were always voices and hands pushing me down from above. Finally, I heard the last voice.

-Give up and submit to me.

It was the first time I've heard this voice. A mysterious voice. It contained more authority than my father in my childhood. Softer than my mother. The voice made it feel like the owner had everything.

-You are weak.

-Stay still and just listen to me.

I started struggling. But my body didn't move. Numerous hands were holding me down and their voices were speaking in unison.

Follow their commands. Say yes. Relax. No, I couldn't relax. I knew how easy it was to entrust my will to the people above me. But, it wasn't an important issue.

My elementary school years.

The lessons I had after school. I didn't remember much save the musical instruments. At that time, it was the most interesting and fun thing that I had done. After going a few times, I had to quit the lessons after school. My parents thought it was an 'expensive hobby' and useless.

That wasn't the only thing I remembered. It was just the oldest memory in my head.

'This isn't something that just anyone could do. If you don't have talent then you'll regret it later. It's better not to look at it.'

That was what my parents said. There was no regret in their words. It wasn't something that could be done as a career, and they doubted that I had the talent. But it wasn't because of my parent's cold evaluation that I spent the next few nights sniffling. It was because I couldn't touch the instrument that had given me so much fun. They just dismissed it, despite the fact that it wasn't what I wanted to do.

-Why are you fighting so hard?

-You won't be able to resist anyway.

Why?

I had been asking myself that same question on the road I had been walking so far. In fact, I answered it several times. Why fight, when it wouldn't make a difference? In my position, what more could I gain?

It didn't matter. Even if I had nothing to gain... I might flop to the ground because I had failed miserably.

But this was all through my will. Only my will. My choice. I didn't want my will to be crushed by someone else. No matter how strong they were, their relationship with me or the rights they had, I would ignore the disgusted gazes from above me. That was it.

I just wanted to climb up.

[The conditions are met.]

[Talent has fully awakened.]

My body twisted.

-...?

The voice sounded confused. This unlucky bastard.

In the end, it was just a worm. I didn't know what its identity was, but I wouldn't be adversely influenced by it.

My body started to change. Anyway, this place wasn't real. It was just an illusion. I peeled off the weak flesh. My body grew longer. Rough hairs grew all over my body and claw like nails emerged on both hands and feet.

-What? Why, just...

I turned my head. My snout became longer and sharp teeth bit at the thing around me. The worm shrieked. More hands appeared on my body and tightened the pressure, but I didn't care. My teeth had already reached it.

I just bit. I tore at it with my claws and bit in.

-It hurts! Hurts!

The voice sounded like a little child. This unlucky bastard. The worm was already caught. I bit it as it cried painfully and struggled. I didn't remove my teeth, I just continued biting.

Continue. Continue. Continue...

“...Ah.”

My eyes opened. I was looking at the ceiling of the incubation room. It was the feeling of returning to my body. I had regained consciousness. Of course, my body wasn't in the form of a beast either.

It was reset.

[Unique Talent - No.099 Underdog: The conscious overcoming of challenges that are higher than yourself. Even though you know you can never get it, you are a dog constantly barking at the sun.]

[A correction value is applied when fighting against an enemy whose total sum of abilities is more than twice your own.]

[Complete immunity to all types of mental interference including morale, brainwashing, oppression etc.]

As I raised my body, I found something wriggling near my feet. It was the worm. It had shrunk quite a lot compared to its previous size. I could hold it in one hand. At first glance, I could see that its life was about to end. It wriggled like a bug that had been sprayed with insecticide.

“...”

Without hesitation, I reached out for it. Unlike before, this time I could touch it.

“Son of a bitch.” Even though I overcame the situation, I still felt angry about it. I prepared to use strength to crush the worm.

“Don’t hate it too much.”

“...”

“It was just ignorant. In fact, it’s a pitiful existence. Even though it’s a sacred creature, it wasn’t born in the arms of a god.”

A Tellan woman suddenly appeared in front of me. She wore clothing that made her look almost naked. She was shining with a gentle halo that illuminated the surroundings.

“... You.”

I smiled slightly and relaxed. The woman was an existence that I knew. I just couldn’t believe it.

“You’ve had some plastic surgery done.”

“Thanks.”

The sun god... No, the goddess smiled at me.

Chapter 51 – Day 13, Upset

In fact, the gender of the statues wasn't clear. However, considering the neutral voice, their forms were closer to men than women.

“Is this what you look like?”

“Rather than that, I wanted to have this appearance.”

Isaiah lifted her hand and touched the air. “I don't have an identity, but I like the human body the best as an avatar. It's something that I created with my restored power.”

“Congratulations.”

“You shouldn't be congratulating me. You put the people in my city so I can have these luxuries.”

The slender fingers fluttered through the air. Isaiah smiled like she enjoyed the pleasure of touching. It wasn't just a free smile. She looked like a child who had managed to touch her dream. “This child. Can you give it to me for a moment?”

“I don't think I will let it go.” Once again, I became angry as I thought about what the worm did to me.

“I understand that you're mad, but I think I can use that child in

a better way for you. I would like to ask for mercy on behalf of that child.”

“... That isn’t an apology.”

I turned over the worm and Isaiah clasped it with both hands. “Originally, the sacred creatures existed as subordinates to the gods but...”

“Does that mean the sacred creatures have a type of divinity? They aren’t aliens?”

“Aliens?”

I waved my hands.

“Well... This child was made to be dependent on humans. It’s good, but the problem is that humans are nothing without their roots.”

Isaiah brought both hands to her mouth and whispered something. The vibration of the worm, that was shaking in Isaiah’s hands, became silent. Once the top hand was removed, the worm rolled into a ball and didn’t move.

“Here.” In the blink of an eye, Isaiah’s hand was touching my chest. The worm disappeared into my chest.

“...Hey. What...?”

“That child is afraid of you. It won’t oppose you again. Right now it is asleep, but you can try it out when it wakes up.”

“...”

I didn’t know if that would be helpful or not. I touched my chest where it was placed but didn’t receive an answer. Then I walked towards the generator. A piece of metal was embedded in the control panel.

The master key. Yoon Chan-hee had plugged it in. All the power that had been poured into maintaining the egg shell was recovered and the extra power was still full. I manipulated the levers. Soon, vibrations started to spread out from the generator. The ceiling and wall lighting devices were now working.

[The incubation room is activated.]

[Neutral Zone – Imperial Research Facility 042: Druid’s Workshop]

I didn’t power up the entire facility. Perhaps... As soon as I fully powered up this facility, it might be cleared and ‘integrated.’ I left the generator for a while and moved outside of the incubation room. The corpses of Yoon Chan-hee’s people were still there.

However, I didn't see the mass of ice that was Chang Ga-ram. Only pieces of the melted ice were visible in his place.

I missed him. He probably wasn't on this floor anymore. The situation didn't seem that bad. Yoon Chan-hee's ability seemed to be one where he could train and operate a large number of people. Yet his people, except for Chang Ga-ram, had been annihilated. As this point, the number of explorers was shrinking, so it would be difficult to regain all those people.

Plus... Yoon Chan-hee had experienced the same thing I had with the sacred creature. Although there was no room for cockiness, he might no longer be a risk.

After acquiring the fingerprints from the bodies and exploring every corner of the facility, I returned to the generator. As I powered up the rest of the facility, I told Isaiah. "I won't go to the city today."

"Isn't everybody looking forward to it? They now have a king."

"It isn't a location I have to return to."

In addition, time there passed like it did in reality. There was no time to act as a good-for-nothing leader. I had to check on reality.

"... Aha." Isaiah smiled with understanding. "Indeed. I guess so."

"How about you tell me what happened to them?" I asked.

“Unfortunately I can’t. It isn’t happening in my area.”

“You can’t break the rules.”

“I guess you understand.” I laughed bitterly.

“I’m sorry.” Isaiah said. It didn’t matter. I hadn’t expected a lot. I immediately manipulated the generator.

“See you next time.”

“Yes. I am looking forward to it.”

As power spread throughout the facility, words appeared.

[Talia’s monarch has occupied the Neutral Zone-Imperial Research Facility 042.]

[Currently merging territory: 3rd area.]

[Monarch privilege – Merger rights: One-time acquisition.]

“You too.”

Just before my view shifted. She didn't make any sound but Isaiah mouthed the words. "You can expect something good."

I picked up my phone as soon as I got up, then made two phone calls. It was to Yang Su-jin and Yoon Ji-hee. People spent different amounts of time in the dungeon, but they woke up at almost the same time.

[... The customer can't receive the call at this time.]

The tone kept ringing but they didn't answer the phone. It was the same for both of them.

"..."

Should I wait a little longer? I was prepared to a certain extent. Even if they picked up the call, they could ask who I was. It was likely, very likely.

Whether or not the two people fell into the same space, they might have died on the ninth floor. There were two of them. However, it depended on their luck and the type of trials they would face. Maybe they met an opponent they couldn't win against, but they could have also escaped safely down the stairs. That was what I ordered before entering the ninth floor.

[... The customer can't receive the call at this time.]

“...Dammit.”

There were dozens of calls and the clock showed that it was past the normal waking time. I changed my clothes and immediately left home.

I knew Yoon Ji-hee and Yang Su-jin's addresses. The two people might have been killed in the dungeon. There was also the chance that if they were tortured, their identities in reality would be revealed. The more dangerous of the two was Yang Su-jin. Being the granddaughter of a chaebol protected Yoon Ji-hee to a certain extent.

I stepped out of the building and took a few steps in an empty alley.

Chobeok.

I felt someone approaching from behind me. In addition, they were careful footsteps, so it couldn't be a passerby. This was just a guess but it absolutely wasn't an ordinary person. I pretended to be unaware as I took three steps. During the fourth step, I unexpectedly turned around.

Kwack!

I grabbed the neck of a man in a suit and immediately pushed him against the wall. I already knew that there was no CCTV in this alley.

“Keuk!” The man against the wall groaned. He pulled at the hand squeezing his throat, but the difference in strength between him and me was quite large.

“Good morning.” In a voice that was close to a growl, I said hello to Kim Tae-hyun.

“I... I... Cough...!”

I held Kim Tae-hyun with one hand. Then I searched through his coat, suit and pants. Kim Tae-hyun was unarmed. I released some of my strength around his neck.

“Pant... I... Not... Attacking you...”

“I know.”

He wasn’t at the level of being a threat to me. At least, not alone. “But we don’t have a relationship where you can come every morning to say hello. Please be aware of this.”

I watched Kim Tae-hyun and the whole alley. I heard the sound of a car that hadn’t turned off its engine. A somewhat older male

sighed.

“This is just a personal problem. You have the right to leave immediately.”

“...”

The man who walked closer wasn’t an explorer. He was a tired looking man in his 50s. He pulled out an electronic cigarette from his coat and started smoking. At that point, I had already released my hand from Kim Tae-hyun’s neck. He leaned against the wall and I brushed the dust from his collar.

“Your boss?”

“...Y-yes.”

I turned Kim Tae-hyun’s body towards the middle-aged man and hit his back. Kim Tae-hyun staggered in front of the man. “That friend is a meal. Isn’t that right?”

“...That...”

The middle-aged man looked at Kim Tae-hyun like he was pathetic and said. “So a person shouldn’t be in a hurry. My world is like that. What do you think normal people would think if they saw this?”

“...”

Kim Tae-hyun's ears turned red. “Get into the car.”

“D-Director...”

“Go in. I don't think I can talk to this friend if you're here. It's better if I tell the story. At the very least, I wouldn't be so disrespectful.”

It was easy to understand that the middle-aged man wasn't normal just by looking at Kim Tae-hyuk's embarrassment.

The middle-aged man started talking. “On the third day, he came and gave me a direct report. It was about the dungeon.”

The middle-aged man pointed to where Kim Tae-hyun had disappeared before taking a step closer to me. “Every morning. I decided to check the status of his abilities through various physical tests and intelligence tests. I called his bluff. I had to make certain that his skills definitely improved in the dungeon.”

“I think that is a smart method.”

If they were aware of it, a person could survive in the dungeon simply by going down the stairs, even if they didn't grow. “Well. Although he is like this, it seems like he was doing fairly well. At least, until last night.” The director sighed.

“But he was tearful as soon as he woke up this morning. He didn’t obtain anything in the dungeon.”

“He ran away?”

“He said he met a good opponent. In his own words.”

The director trusted Kim Tae-hyun, so it must be right. If he ran away, with his pride, then it meant he met a really strong opponent. “There is a problem. The information about the opponent isn’t in our data.”

“That is strange but can’t there be some gaps in your data? The big data has only been accumulated for 11 days.” The director looked up at me.

“Nine, including you. Yesterday, you ate one of them, making it eight. That is how many people we figured had the ‘excellent survival gene.’”

Things started to slowly make sense.

“How many of those people are out?”

“If I include you... There is one more person who survived, but he isn’t in a mentally stable condition.”

“...”

Nine people had gathered yesterday under the government's call. Of course, I didn't think all the people would be gathered. But even I thought at least 80%, more than half, were gathered there.

“There are at least five monsters I don't know about about. Furthermore, in the future, they will become stronger and smarter. I don't know if I can find them in the future but... Kim Tae-hyun said they would be impossible to control. Especially since yesterday's actions.”

At that time, my phone rang. The director motioned for me to pick up the phone.

“Yes.”

[Oppa!]

It was Yang Su-jin.

[Your absence was truly awful!! Where are you now?]

To be honest, it was a really welcome voice. But instead of laughing, I controlled my facial expressions and spoke calmly. “I'll call you later.” Yang Su-jin noticed quickly.

[I understand.]

She immediately lessened the volume of her voice and whispered.

[Ji-hee unni is with me.]

“Yes.”

[I have a city now.]

Chapter 52 – Day 13, What To Eat?

After hearing her words over the phone, the public official in front of me wasn't my main concern.

[Monarch privilege: Merger Rights (1 time).]

[It is possible to submit it to a conqueror who owns a territory and if the conqueror agrees, it is possible to merge territories. Once the submission is completed, all territories, citizens and vassals will be integrated into the territory of the monarch.]

[A vassal is basically a citizen and this right can be deprived at any time by the monarch. As long as a person has citizenship, they can stay in the monarch's territory.]

[The Merger Rights can only be presented to those who own more than one city.]

It was a compensation I had obtained from clearing the ninth floor. If I used this then territories can be integrated and we could enter by the same stairs. We would surely meet again! But I didn't know for sure what happened to Yoon Ji-hee. The only thing I knew was that the city was in Yang Su-jin's hands. If so, what would happen to Yoon Ji-hee if we merged?

First...

“Are you listening?”

“...Ah.”

Director Oh Chang-shik, the middle-aged man who introduced himself with that name, sighed. Well. My actions weren't very polite. Despite hanging up the phone, I was still thinking about that conversation. However, the information hadn't passed by me.

Beyond imagination. Out of control. These words summarized the problem that Director Oh had.

Kim Tae-hyun was weak. He wasn't my rival. Rather, he was only in the ‘explorer’ department and was therefore appointed as the administrator. Kim Tae-hyun's assessment abilities were excellent. His bloodline allowed him a senior position and his ambitions matched with national interest.

“The situation was already a little shaky due to what happened yesterday.”

Director Oh said in a pitiful voice. Yesterday's ambush and explosion. Kim Tae-hyun used his authority to settle the situation, but his bosses couldn't help questioning him.

“Although he might be able to handle a large number of people with his gun...”

The means by which Tae-hyuk controlled the explorers was authority, not force. Even so, the explorers might cause extraordinary outbursts, so he must have the power to control them. Although I had lured the one who attacked yesterday, it was quite possible that another person with such aggression would have attacked Kim Tae-hyun. In the end, Kim Tae-hyun had shown his incompetence yesterday.

“If there wasn’t enough, there was what happened last night.’ Apart from me, only one out of the seven remaining people gathered had survived. The one who survived had gone insane.

“The person who isn’t sane, is it Yoon Chan-hee?”

“... Do you know something?”

“We were on the same floor.”

“...”

Director Oh paused for a moment. “If you were on the same floor, then the unknown risk factor has reduced by one... I am glad.”

Yoon Chan-hee and I were probably the only ‘kings’ placed on the same floor. In other words, there were five people who killed the ones chosen by the government. At first glance it wasn’t that different, but it was a pretty huge difference. First of all, nothing was known about them. Age, gender, profession and their values

and thoughts.

Furthermore, they were strong. Not only did they managed to overwhelm the existing five people, they had gained strength by eating those five people. I couldn't imagine the abilities they would have right now. I thought that all the strong people were gathered yesterday, but there were those who I couldn't grasp.

To make matters worse, Kim Tae-hyun was left behind on the ninth floor. He was weaker in strength. There was no way to overcome it with social means. If one of those unknown threats committed a brutal murder, then the government would have no answers.

Let's look at an example. I had gained manhwa like strength, it wasn't that strong in the 21st century. Probably around a tank? If there was infantry platoon armed with advanced equipment and the conditions were right then I could be hunted down. But I was a human. Seemingly ordinary.

A human-sized weapon that held the compressed force of a tank and superior intelligence, plus random superpowers. This wasn't an 'open' battlefield. It was a city crowded with people. I was a lurking being that was different from other humans. Frankly, the thought still gave me goosebumps.

"Besides, things have becoming complicated since yesterday."

"Because of the explosion?"

Director Oh nodded. “Yes. I collected the CCTV of the fight in the hallway, but people are still suspicious. They don’t want such terrorist attacks to be overlooked.” The fact that I could cause explosions with both hands was better off being hidden in the future.

“I think it is time that you get to the point.”

“It’s simple. You do this work instead of Deputy Manager Kim.”

“What’s the price?”

“Freedom.”

I pretended that I didn’t understand. “I am a slave now?”

“I’m not talking about human rights.” Ah. It was just as I thought.

“I believe that you are well aware of the work that my department is doing. In addition, what you can get from us.” Of course, I knew it very well. It was inevitable that a reward would be given.

“Shouldn’t you present your side first?” I continued speaking before there was a response. “If you have a subject that needs to be controlled then I will run straight away to help you.”

“...Hrmm?” Director Oh raised one eyebrow with surprise.

Instead. “I will eat that target.”

“...!”

I wanted the right to eat the target that I defeated, not just subdue or capture them. In addition, any damages or legal problems that occurred would be covered. Director Oh frowned as he thought about my words. “It is difficult.”

“Of course it is. But isn’t that normal?”

It was obvious what the government would do with a captured explorer. In the first place, they were a person who had already caused trouble. Even if they were confined, they could enter the dungeon at midnight and become stronger. In the end, they would be fed to Kim Tae-hyun. It was because Kim Tae-hyun was their safest card.

continued. “I should take a few points as well. In the first place, aren’t I being a good citizen by catching these people? It shouldn’t be for free.”

“... You are mistaken if you think we will offer such rewards. Furthermore, you aren’t the only person I can ask.”

“Then this is simple.” I raised my palm and extended it to Director Oh. “It was a short meeting, but I enjoyed it.”

Of course, there was one more person. If the crazy Yoon Chan-hee was added then there were two people.

But they came to me. If I looked closer, then I could understand why they ran to me. I didn't have a name or organization behind me. I was the cleanest. I had already completed a census once. They were already aware of everything. My profile wasn't unknown.

I was the only child of an average low income family. There were zero relatives with power and money. I was also predictable and could be cooked whenever they felt like eating.

I didn't know who the other person was. However, it was likely that they would be a few social classes above me, like Kim Tae-hyun. The conditions I presented were childish mischief. On top of that, only Director Oh's department would be familiar with the ridiculous conditions.

Director Oh started speaking, “Your own position...”

“I know very well. I've always lived thinking about my position.”

It was obvious what he was saying. He could try to bury me as much as he liked.

“I know very well.”

In order to ruin a human, there were many weapons that could be used. Just the CCTV from yesterday would show me doing a crime. The danger was that the person in front of me couldn't get away. Even if I was willing to follow suit, I would be in a weaker position where they could control me.

Rather, there was no reason to be afraid. A weakness that couldn't be overcome wasn't a weakness. That was my basic framework.

"I am just a 23 year old going to school. So even a single red line means a life as a servant."

"Your standards are too low."

"I have a habit of wanting to live perfectly. So if that happens, you might end up losing everything." I declared.

"..."

I felt something. Director Oh stepped backwards.

Ruin me? It sounded ridiculous. In the first place, these people wouldn't have come to me without safeguards to control me. If I got eaten... There would be great consequences.

"If that happens."

I grinned at his expression and placed a palm on my chest. “I would appreciate it if it stays like that for the rest of my life. I don’t want to become a nuisance to society.”

“... Is that a threat?”

“Did you hear me correctly?” I released some killing intent.

A sound emerged from Director Oh’s lips. It was a sigh. This person was quite great. He had heard beforehand from Kim Tae-hyun but it was different seeing it in person.

“It is appealing.” I pointed to the back of the alley. Kim Tae-hyun was watching from the car with his phone out... That’s right, I had destroyed his phone. Anyway, Kim Tae-hyun was looking in this direction. “If I eat him, then I won’t be able to gain that much. In the first place, he was left behind yesterday.”

“...So... Do you want me to give you a ride?”

“At least one of us will keep growing bigger. That is the structure of the dungeon.”

Don’t bet on a helpless guy like that, bet on the big one in front of you. Anyway, I was a simple person. Without any background, I was just a person who existed alone. They could paint the background. I think I had given them enough hints.

“Well, I don’t think we have any more to talk about here. If you

don't have any more to tell me then I'll be going now."

I gave Director Oh a few minutes. He had nothing to say. I also needed more time to think. I was going to eat lunch with Yang Su-jin. I should also listen to Yoon Ji-hee's story. I looked at my phone as I started walking away. It was because I didn't think that Director Oh had anything more to say.

"... Do you mind giving me some of your time if you are free right now?"

"What for?"

"It is a completely different matter from what I've said so far. Think of it as a personal favor."

What was this? I brought my phone to my mouth. Director Oh didn't seem to want to say anything else.

"What do you want?"

"Get in the car and go somewhere with me. Or you can go back."

I glanced between my phone that showed Yang Su-jin's number and Director Oh. It was intuition rather than logic. I didn't trust Director Oh, but he didn't seem like the type to use a trick in such a short period of time.

“Okay.”

Kim Tae-hyun saw this as he leaned against the car. He looked at my face with surprise and said.

“Director. This...”

“Get in. We are going to the bomb shelter.”

“...!”

Kim Tae-hyun stared at my face like he wanted to say something. However, Director Oh just turned his head away and got on the passenger seat of the car. Between the front seat and back seat, a sliding plate was installed. As soon as the car started, Director Oh closed this up and made the backseats soundproof.

“As I said earlier. This isn’t official. There is no conditions for you But... I don’t think I can talk about the compensation at the moment.”

“I think you’ve succeeded.” Right now, everything was unknown. He had successfully stimulated my curiosity.

But it made no sense to go this far if it was a deception. The car headed to the outskirts of Seoul. It was only a few minutes outside of the city but the surroundings were green. At that bottom of a mountain, there was a tunnel that headed into a bomb shelter.

“I am going to show you an explorer.”

“... One more in addition to Kim Tae-hyun?”

“They aren’t a public servant... we aren’t even in a position to touch them.”

A person that couldn’t be touched. I soon realized that it had quite a few meanings.

“I want you to see her and tell me your opinion.”

A few minutes later, I faced a monster. In addition, another unique talent.

Chapter 53 – Day 13, Natural Enemy

Reality in the movies was a lot different from the real world. For example, the CIA wasn't an adventurous group that took missions like Mission Impossible everyday. It was just a government organization that had a lot of tedious paperwork.

Of course, this was just a passage that I read in a book, but it was something that I unconsciously accepted. Actual reality was far less than virtual reality. Funnily enough, I still thought like this despite the existence of the dungeon.

“...”

I couldn't help feeling surprised. Although this might be slightly exaggerated, it seemed like the whole mountain had been hollowed out to become this facility. It felt like a military base from a movie. There were armoured cars and tanks scattered throughout the wide space.

“Wait in the car for a moment.”

Once the car parked inside the tunnel, Director Oh got out of the car. The facility was very wide, but the figures of people could rarely be seen. It looked like there was only a maintenance crew.

“...Sheesh.” Kim Tae-hyuk clicked his tongue from the front seat. It seemed like the sound wasn't directed towards me.

“I guess this is something that you can’t resolve.”

“...!”

Kim Tae-hyun blushed at my words. Now his reaction was clearly visible. It seemed like Director Oh’s request was something that incited jealousy in Kim Tae-hyun. Was it due to an enormous reward? No, Director Oh hadn’t said anything specific about a reward. Then... Maybe it was something not connected to Director Oh. There might be someone else involved.

“Do you have some advice as a person who failed? I would really appreciate it.”

“...I could succeed. I just encountered a natural enemy...”

“Natural enemy?”

Kim Tae-hyun didn’t say anything else. He just looked irritated.

-A delicious smell.

“What?”

“...What?”

Kim Tae-hyun turned around at my question. The voice I heard

wasn't his.

-A delicious smell.

It was a voice I had heard before. And it wasn't a sound from the 'outside.'

"I'm sorry. I have a habit of talking to myself."

After that, I closed the soundproof barrier. Then I once again started 'talking to myself'.

"What is with this bastard?"

The voice was coming from the divine creature. Isaiah had planted the bug in me and said it would soon wake up. Instead of answering, a shape popped out from my chest. It fell onto my thigh and then the backseat before wriggling its four legs.

"...Dog?"

It wasn't a curse. It didn't look like an alien creature from the movies. Instead, it was like a puppy that wasn't even one month old yet. The breed... Siberian Husky? No. That wasn't the important thing. The tail that hadn't fully grown wagged excitedly as he approached the nearest window. He lifted his legs and somehow raised his head to the window.

-Delicious! Delicious...

Deopsseok.

I grabbed the back of the dog's neck. There was a whining sound as the puppy's eyes met mine.

-It hurts!

I had no idea he could look so pitiful and cute but I ignored him. It was just like looking at a child throwing a tantrum.

“What are you doing?”

-I was wrong! I won't do it again. I won't. There is a delicious smell coming from there...

I had footsteps stop outside the car. I growled at the sacred creature.

“Whatever it is, enter my body again. If you look out then you will die.”

Of course, I didn't really intend to kill it. The body of the small dog trembled with terror. It was shaking so much that I felt like I was holding an electric massage machine.

“Come along.” I followed Director Oh.

I could see hatches placed at regular intervals on the walls. Finally, there was a steel door with locks that could be turned, like a bank vault. Maybe the real bomb shelter was beyond that door. It was a place where someone could survive a nuclear weapon.

Director Oh didn’t take me through straight away, but instead moved to a control room where people were watching the situation. They had communication equipment and monitors on their desks. Just like a CCTV system, different areas were being shown on the monitors.

“Has anything been caught?”

“No. Perhaps they are asleep. The sleep cycle is becoming noticeably irregular...”

Director Oh clicked his tongue. Then he looked at me and said.

“My request is simple. You would’ve seen the door as we passed. There is someone I want you to restrain beyond that door.”

“Restrain? Not kill?”

Director Oh nodded. “You absolutely can’t kill or create a serious injury. If you think that you can’t win then just give up and go. After the suppression is over, we should be able to put restraints on the person without any problems.”

“I understand. I still haven’t heard about the compensation.”

“If this is completed successfully, I won’t ask you to ‘restrain’ someone again in the future.”

The meaning, “Does that mean you will accept the offer from me?” I asked.

“I will permit it.”

Director Oh nodded and we left the control room. Outside, armed soldiers were waiting. Their uniform wasn’t that of simply soldiers. Although they were armed with tasers instead of normal guns, there was clearly tension on their faces.

“Based on the premise that you successfully subdue the person inside... I will accept all your requirements.”

“Okay.”

We crossed the bomb shelter. As we moved, I asked Director Oh. “Is there anything else I should know?”

“Not really. But is there anything that you want to ask?”

There were many things. “Who is inside?”

“I’m not in a position to say.”

But the candidates had already been narrowed a lot. A human who could use this shelter at their own discretion.

“In the first place, they aren’t ‘confined’ in there are they?”

“...” I understood the director’s silence as agreement.

I had looked at the CCTV. It looked like a comfortable living space. It was a place suitable for ‘refuge’ rather than ‘confinement.’ Even if this was a bomb shelter, there were various places more suitable to confining someone.

Therefore, I guessed that the person wasn’t trapped because they couldn’t be controlled. A person might abuse the secure air base for dungeon exploration. In addition, the location of this place was confidential. There was virtually no threat to reality.

Ching.

The door to the bomb shelter was opened. The soldiers aimed their tasers at the entrance. Director Oh’s body was shaking.

“Close the door as soon as I enter.” I stated.

“Then...”

“I won’t even think about running away.” I asserted before taking a step inside.

“Rather, it stops a path of retreat.”

“You look confident.” Director Oh laughed bitterly. “Good luck.”

“Thank you.”

Ching.

The door closed and I looked at the open space before me. It was the living space that I had seen on the CCTV. It looked like a VIP room from a luxury hotel. Of course, that wasn’t what I was looking at.

“...Well.”

I took a few steps and saw the bodies. They wore suits instead of soldier uniforms. The bodies of unarmed men. Next to the couch, there were the bodies of two men in uniform, like the ones outside. I now knew for certain. The extent of the corruption was confirmed. The men in the suits died much earlier.

—Delicious... The smell...

The voice sounded a little depressed. Just like when I opened my

stats window, I asked a question in my mind.

‘What is the delicious smell?’

–Just my food... At that time, I ate a food that smelt good. Master as well...

Then he added in a trembling voice.

–Ah... I... I will never eat Master. I won't eat. Don't bite me.

At that moment, the sound of footsteps overlapped with the voice. I turned around.

“....”

A woman with disheveled hair stood in front of me. The shadows under her eyes seemed to be due to extreme stress, not just lack of sleep. She hadn't washed in a few days, so a foul odor spread from her. Blood dripped from the thumb she was biting.

“...You.”

“What?” I knew what the girl was saying but I pretended not to so that I could step closer.

-A delicious smell!

“...Don’t...”

“Fix your pronunciation. I can’t understand.”

“Get away from me! You son of a bitch!”

“...!”

Despite how prepared I was, I still felt surprise. The women’s atmosphere changed so dramatically. She was now foaming at the mouth and her bloodshot eyes were shaking. At the same time, a dark killing intent could be felt from her!

Of course, I heard her words but hadn’t really understood the meaning. There was a shocking amount of hatred directed not at me, but at the world.

“Kihi!” She made a noise like a goblin and rushed towards me.

Fast!

Nevertheless, it was at a level that I could cope with. I stepped back and extended my fist. It was a punch at the abdomen with my strength restrained. I thought it would be enough to overpower her. It was a miscalculation.

Tak!

As she grabbed my fist with her arms, she raised her legs and wrapped them around my arms and shoulders. In the blink of an eye, one arm was broken.

“Hihiji!” She spat crazily as she looked at me and didn’t move. The firmness and flexibility of my newly formed muscles and bones were good. I took a deep breath and grasped the hem of the woman’s clothes with my locked arms. Then I swung the woman hanging onto my arm down towards the ground.

Teong! A groan flowed from the woman’s mouth. I wasn’t aiming to hurt her but she was injured. I could tell from the force around my arm. As the force squeezing my arm weakened, I lifted her up and swung a second time. Her limbs were completely detached from my arms and I let go of her clothes. Her body flew to the other side.

Kung!

Jjeolgurong!

The place that she crashed into was a small bar/kitchen so there was a loud noise as the glass broken and household utensils fell. As expected, she immediately got up. Even though she experienced a tremendous force, she wasn’t that hurt. The killing intent just thickened even further.

Syuok!

A frying pan hit my cheek and I fell back over the sofa. It wasn't just that. She threw all types of pots and utensils before rushing over to me. One hand was holding a knife used for meat.

"Hiit!" As she threw the knife at me, I slid down. Before the action was over, the knife she threw passed over my head in a breathtaking way. I rolled to avoid it and got up.

I triggered Darkness Cloud. But surprising, apart from a momentary stiffness, she avoided my outstretched hand in the darkness. She backed away a few steps and stared for a moment, before continuing with her throwing attacks like she had spotted the core of the darkness.

She seemed to have something that improved reflexes. I wasn't sure whether it was a talent or technique, but her movements couldn't be explained with simple agility. Furthermore, just looking at the physical abilities, she was the most outstanding among the individuals I had met so far in the dungeon. If I encountered her after just finishing the seventh floor, then I would probably be covered in blood by now.

"Hiih! Hi! Hihihih!"

But my patience had already reached its limit. I lifted Darkness Cloud.

"Hihit!" She grasped a frying pan and knife and rushed at me once again. The frying pan was aimed at my head while the knife

headed towards my body.

Puok!

A cold blade was stabbed in my abdomen.

“I got you.” I grabbed her wrists and growled. She seemed to want to use the same move as before but I wouldn’t fall for the same trick twice.

Hwik!

As I held her wrists, I swung her entire body towards the ground. Despite not using my maximum strength, the impact from hitting the ground was no joke. I pulled out the knife stuck in my abdomen and slammed the blunt end down. Indeed, her face flattened like a pancake. A groan emerged from her mouth as her crushed nose started bleeding. I got on top of her.

And I waited.

“Hey!”

Shortly afterwards, the soldiers arrived with Director Oh.

“...Didn’t I tell you not to hurt her?”

“It is just a broken nose, not a serious injury.”

My words were irrefutable. Director Oh gave a command to the soldiers. Soon the soldiers approached and placed her in a straitjacket.

“That will have no meaning. Perhaps after entering the dungeon and becoming stronger, she will just tear out of it.” If it was put on me, then I would be able to tear out of it straight away.

“I know. But... A mother wants to talk to her daughter for a little bit. She hasn’t been able to be knocked out for a few days.”

I nodded as I looked at the people clearing the bodies in the room.
“Anyway, I have fulfilled your request?”

“...Yes. In the future, I will leave the explorers to you... If you can’t control them then I give you the right to kill them. I can give you this position if you want.”

This was a lot easier than I thought.

“Soo-young!” Shortly afterwards, a woman in her 50s entered the bomb shelter. She held the cheek of the woman called ‘Soo-young’ in the cleaned room and cried while saying something. No matter what she did, Soo-young was still out of her mind. She even bit the woman’s hand touching her cheek.

“...In the end, the most important thing in this world is power.”

Director Oh said while smoking his electronic cigarette.

“In other words, you have to kill general explorers with your own hands.” He was standing at the threshold of the bomb shelter with me. He looked at the painful reunion of the middle-aged woman. Then he started explaining.

“The signs started on the third day. On the third day that she left the dungeon, she sliced apart one of her friends.”

“Did you settle it?”

“I still think about that day.” Even though he had done many dirty work behind the scenes, he still reacted to that horror.

“The next day... I thought about gathering people like you together. There was a bitter taste in my mouth.”

Although it might be sensitive information, there was a reason why the director told me this. A few days had passed so there was no evidence remaining and... First of all, he thought that I already knew the identity of the middle-aged woman. It was natural. Anybody with common sense would know that face.

“Anyway, thank you for the trouble. The additional compensation for this work... To be honest, I can’t do it right now. Since that person is crying like that... But I’ll submit the report later. I will surely keep my promise.”

“I believe you.” I replied and took a few steps. It was towards the inside of the bomb shelter. Towards the middle-aged woman and Soo-young.

“...Hey.”

Director Oh knew where I was heading and grabbed my arm. “I told you. You don’t need to do anything with that girl anymore. I will keep my promise.”

“Yes. I also told you that I believe you. But...”

I touched my abdomen. My natural recovery had grown to such a degree that an injury like this was easily healed. But I had still been stabbed by a knife.

“There is something I need to get.”

With those words, I gently pulled my arm away from Director Oh. I immediately headed to the sofa where Soo-young was.

“You...” The woman, who was crying as she watched her daughter try to bite her, looked over at me.

“I think it is terrible.” I lowered myself to my knees and faced Soo-young. “If there was a way to get your daughter back, what would you do?”

“...!”

Even if a person she didn't know was saying this, it was putting words into the ears of a desperate person. It was why cancer patients were deceived by scams and bought panaceas. This woman had confined her daughter, who had become a serial killer, instead of subjecting her to the laws of the country, so I knew her mindset.

“I-If you can, anything...”

“Think about your words carefully. Although this is a fairly important story.” I smiled as I looked at the First Lady.

“Why don't you try talking about it with your husband?”

Chapter 54 – Day 13 Princess And Dog (1)

“...!” Director Oh, walking urgently after me, stopped in his place. I turned and looked at him.

“What... T-There is a way you can fix Soo-young?” He asked.

“I’m not sure. There is one way that might work.”

That alone was enough for someone who had fallen into despair. The mother suddenly took hold of my wrist. She was crying so badly that I could barely understand what she was saying.

“...Child... Her father is the president of this country. I-I mean...”

“Madam.” Once Director Oh realized the unusual state of the First Lady, he gestured for the room to be cleared. “Please calm down before talking again.”

Director Oh took me to a corner of the room. “What are you up to? Can you really fix her? What is the method?”

“I told you that I’m not sure. I received a clue after seeing her.”

“If there was such a thing, then you should’ve told me first.”

Of course, this situation who would’ve then ended much more quietly. But I had spoken to the First Lady who didn’t know much

about this. Director Oh wasn't an explorer like Kim Tae-hyun, who was aware of the dungeon and how amazing it was, so he might not believe me.

However, if there was even a 'possibility' of restoring Soo-young to normal, then he would have to try it. He would ask me about the method and then write it up in a report. It would go to her father, the president, who would give permission or not. I changed things by going directly to his wife.

"I-I'm okay now! So let me talk!" It was the First Lady who had calmed herself down. As far as I knew, the First Lady was an ordinary housewife who only got a university education. She didn't know much about the dungeon and the public affairs, but she was the president's wife.

"...I guess you've made some calculations. I'm tired of talking to you." I said to Director Oh.

"Shouldn't you personally explain it?"

"I think that Kim Tae-hyun should be fine. It has already become like this."

I said bluntly and Kim Tae-hyun walked over to the First Lady to explain. I inwardly spoke.

'The delicious smell is coming from the female right?'

-Yes.

The worm, no the dog answered.

'What is that smell exactly? Apart from me, do the rest of the people here have it?'

-Other prey. They don't smell delicious. There won't be much to gain if I eat them. I don't want to eat.

I thought about his words.

'You said you could smell it, but I smell differently from the one you ate in the dungeon.'

-Huh? Dungeon...? What is that?

'...?'

-I-I'm sorry but I don't know. Don't bite me. Don't scratch me.

The sacred creature seemed a bit stupid. I felt like there was nothing wrong with his head, but he didn't know anything about the basics. It was natural since he was just born. After repeating a few questions, I was able to get the answers that I wanted. On the ninth floor, there was no prey that smelled delicious other than Yoon Chan-hee and me.

I walked over to Soo-young. “#%@#%@#%%%.” She cursed in Korean. But due to the emotional and urgent tone, it sounded like an alien language. I felt it before, but it contained an obvious hatred.

Of course, I had never met this woman. In addition, her hate wasn't only directed towards me. She didn't care even when looking at her mother.

‘You are able to get rid of people's desires.’

–...What is desire...?

‘I mean, is it possible eat that power?’

–Yes! I can do it! I want to eat!

He noticed quickly. A puppy jumped out of her chest and ran straight towards her.

‘Hey. Don't eat yet...’

Kung.

But he couldn't penetrate her skin. The puppy raised his paws to his head and started crying. He looked at me like he was seeking answers.

-I can't go in.

I remembered what Isaiah said. He was a creature that had to depend on humans. Now he would call me Master. If so, could he only feed on my desires? The puppy's face looked at me very carefully.

'What?'

-Touch the food. Then I might be able to.

I put my hand on Soo-young's head. The dog jumped back into my chest and a change suddenly appeared.

"@#\$@#%...." Soo-young's eyes shook, but I couldn't feel anything directly.

'Hey, stop. Stop eating.'

It was encouraging that he could do this, but it was too soon to tell if this would cure her. I lifted my hand from Soo-young's head. But...

"This...#@##%@#%"

What? Within a few seconds, Soo-young's eyes were restored to their original state.

I see. This guy's 'meal' was the desires that were constantly springing up. It seemed correct when thinking about what desire was. Then what about Yoon Chan-hee? I asked but Isaiah never helped me directly.

-Digging up the roots won't create something delicious.

If it kept eating, then it would run out of food. In other words, Yoon Chan-hee had been eaten to the 'roots' and couldn't recover immediately, while the sacred creature only had a light taste from Soo-young. If so, it was impossible for his madness to be cured.

"Yes. Do you think the method will work?"

Director Oh's voice was heard. I got up.

This was it. The best conditions. "Of course."

"Just now... I tried to contact the president but he is busy with matters of state and I wasn't able to talk to him."

Ah. Of course. Director Oh's voice sounded slightly nervous. He knew that whatever I wanted, it would be impossible to give it to me with just the authority of the wife. Therefore, I wouldn't heal this woman even if I knew the way. That was what he thought.

"Ah. It doesn't matter."

I looked behind me. I saw Director Oh and the First Lady.

“I think I can improve her aggressive state. Don’t worry about the compensation, and I will do what I can for now. In the end, isn’t the person the most important thing?”

“...!”

“That, I am really grateful... Please, I am begging you My Soo-young...” The First Lady grabbed my hand while Director Oh was asking ‘What are you planning?’ with his eyes. I just grinned at him before turning back to Soo-young.

“\$%^#\$^&\$%^&c.”

“...Speak up.”

I whispered so that no one could hear and raised a hand to her face and shoulder. ‘Eat. Until I say to stop.’

The meal began.

“#%@#%!!!!”

A reaction appeared as soon as her desire started to be eaten. It was the breaking of the will that Yoon Chan-hee and I experienced.

“\$0|\$..... This... #\$@\$...Stop....! \$%^&!!

“Soo-young!”

“Don’t interrupt.”

I grabbed the shaking body. The woman’s killing intent gradually faded until fear and horror appeared on her face.

That’s it. I pulled away my hands.

“...Ah...”

Soo-young swayed for a moment. She raised her head. There was no more killing intent in her eyes. There was just a strong feeling of fatigue.

“Mama...”

“Soo-young!”

I stepped away from the melodramatic scene. The cleanup inside the bomb shelter was over. There was only me, the mother and Director Oh.

“...How surprising.”

“Let’s see. Did you think I was just running my mouth?”

In fact, there was no chance of that. I was running my mouth, but there was no need to hurry if Soo-young was cured. The value of the reward presented to me would be much weaker than what it could be.

Of course. IF she was healed.

“I don’t know how many hours it will take, but her madness will come back.”

“What?! You purposely...”

“In the first place, curing her is impossible. Of course, if she goes crazy again then I can make her sane again. But it’s just temporary.”

The sacred creature said it was possible if the root was destroyed, but then it wouldn’t be much different from dying in the dungeon. Whether it was the will of the First Lady or the president, her parents didn’t want anything to happen to their daughter.

That was a very good sign for me. Once the madness returns, I was the only one who could ‘temporarily’ restore their daughter.

“You are a more thorough type than I thought...”

“That doesn’t sound like a compliment.

Even though I made a promise with Director Oh, there is no obligation for both parties to observe the promise. They might find that I was easier to eat, or Kim Tae-hyun might suddenly become stronger on the next floor. I could be abandoned at any time.

But now things had changed.

“Please explain it to the First Lady as well. She will be quite heartbroken once she knows that there is no cure.” Now the only way for the president’s daughter to lead a good life was me. It was an advantage that only I could have.

“...Why don’t you explain it?”

“I don’t want to lose my image. In addition, I should look at the condition of the patient a bit more... Oh, I also have a request that I would like you to listen to.”

I went to the bathroom and cleaned my body. The knife stab wound was almost better now. I opened the emergency first aid box, sterilized the wound and attached a bandage. I left the bathroom and looked around the kitchen, which was a mess. There were many food and drinks in the refrigerator for Soo-young. I took out a bottle of juice and approached Soo-young, who had removed the straitjacket.

Although it was still unsure if her condition had truly improved,

her mother had taken off the straitjacket.

“How are you feeling?” Soo-young was the daughter of President Jin Su-cheol. Jin Soo-young looked at me.

“....” She received the juice without talking and turned her gaze to my face. I was well aware that my looks were good in a superficial society.

She asked me, “How...? Did you?”

“I’m sorry. It is like the basics of a business empire so I can’t tell you.” I smiled and changed the topic. “Is it a unique talent? The talent that Soo-young got on the third day.”

“...!”

It was a combination of information received from Director Oh and my own speculations. Of course, I didn’t explain my process of reasoning.

“Yes... That’s right.”

“Call this a reward for me. If you don’t mind, can you tell me exactly what that talent is?”

“...”

Jin Soo-young seemed unwilling to answer. She saw me as a potential enemy so she didn't want to disclose the information. It was a unique talent that caused her to lose her temper and kill people. There wouldn't be a proper explanation for that.

'If the answer is difficult then don't say it.' I could say that. However, I decided to go with a bold route.

"I am Soo-young's doctor. I will continue to be next to you and help you live a normal life. I won't do anything harmful to Soo-young."

To be precise, I wouldn't do anything 'for the moment.' Depending on the variables in the future, I might eat and possess her talent. Therefore, I wanted to know the details.

"..."

Jin Soo-young hesitated for a bit before reaching for the table next to the sofa. Paper and a pen were placed there. I accepted the paper that Jin Soo-young handed over.

[Unique Talent No. 044 Butcher: You are constantly filled with the desire to kill others. The more dignified and noble the blood on your hands, the greater the urge to spill more. The instinct for killing is not necessarily the most fundamental, but it is certainly the most essential instinct. It is the most recognized instinct.]

[When dealing with ‘creatures’, you will receive a real-time awareness of the best way to kill the enemy using all the means you possess.]

[When dealing with ‘creatures’, you will always get the ‘enhanced’ status.]

[You won’t become tired when dealing with ‘creatures’.]

I read it then looked at Jin Soo-young’s face.

She explained, “From the moment I got it... I couldn’t control myself. So...”

“...”

It was something to think about. This woman...

“Hey.” I turned my head. Director Oh had a grim expression on his face. He handed his phone to me.

“Your request. To bring someone... I sent Kim Tae-hyun. I was sure he would do his best to bring them here safely.”

“Then?”

“...Take it and see.”

I took the phone. The caller ID on the screen showed Kim Tae-hyun’s name. Kim Tae-hyun’s voice was heard before I brought the phone to my ear. However, he didn’t seem to be speaking into the phone. His voice echoed like he was a little distance away.

“Yes. I received the call.’

[Why did you ask me to bring this person? What...?]

He sounded angry but concern and anxiety was behind it.

[...Win...]

His voice became muffled.

[Oppa?]

“It’s me.” Once I spoke, Yang Su-jin’s voice became clear.

[Oppa sent this pushover?!]

“Pushover?”

[I already met him.]

I could hear Kim Tae-hyun groaning.

[On the 9th floor.]

Chapter 55 – Day 13 Princess And Dog (2)

After finishing the conversation, I handed the phone to Director Oh.

“It isn’t a big deal. The deputy manager will come back safely.”

“...”

“Well, it looks like something did happen. I think it’s the result of something he did.” I explained.

I thought about it again. I looked at Jin Soo-young.

“...” As if she was suddenly burdened by my gaze, Jin Soo-young blushed and turned her head away.

I wasn’t looking at her in that sense. This woman.

I had two unique talents: Atlas and Underdog.

I realized that unique talents were different from ordinary talents and techniques that could be gained in the dungeon. Very different.

The first time I had some questions was on the fifth floor. At the time of the mini-game, I chose a brutal way to reduce the number of challengers. Even those who were watching were bothered by

my cruel torture. Of course, it was a reasonable method, but somewhere in my mind, I felt a sense of discomfort. Thinking about a rational method and putting it into practice were entirely separate matters.

On the sixth floor, it turned into a certain conviction. Even if the situation was unavoidable, I solved the problem with violence. I killed everyone except for Yang Su-jin and Yoon Ji-hee.

Atlas: ‘Your body will become stronger, leading to a desire to oppress others through violence.’ It had a huge impact on my actions.

Underdog was the same as well. Unlike Atlas that I gained from others, this unique talent was something I already had. I was convinced as soon as I saw the description. The driving force in my life so far had been based on this unique talent. After fully awakening Underdog, my values changed one more time. Unlike with Atlas, this time I was conscious and it was easy to notice the change.

I was different from yesterday. If it was the me from yesterday, I likely would have been overwhelmed by the scale of the situation involving the president and retreated. The point of a unique talent wasn’t just a few paragraphs to improve my stats. It affected the formation of human values.

“Soo-young, do you have a city?”

“Huh?”

“If you have a city then you can accompany me in the dungeon.”

“...!”

“Was there such a thing?” It was Director Oh who asked. I immediately explained the Merger Rights.

“Soo-young will lose a city, but I will be next to her and can give her constant protection.” It was essentially the same offer I made to Yoon Ji-hee.

“Then... Look, isn’t it obvious? It isn’t something I can talk about with my status. I need to report the problem. Her father...” Director Oh raised a fuss instead of Soo-young.

“Then report it, but please also consider Soo-young.”

I looked at Soo-young. “It isn’t bad for everyone.” I walked away from the mother and daughter and headed outside to wait for Kim Tae-hyun. Not long after, his vehicle arrived.

“Oppa!”

“Hee-chul.”

Yang Su-jin and Yoon Ji-hee came running as they saw me. Their reaction was more than I expected, so I was pleased. I never

imagined that they would be able to capture a city.

“What happened?”

“It wasn’t a big deal. Whether we were lucky or not, the only one we encountered on that floor was the pushover.”

Yang Su-jin nodded towards the car. Kim Tae-hyun was on the passenger side.

“As soon as he saw us, he started firing his machine gun.”

“So?”

“I charged him.”

Indeed. Kim Tae-hyun’s main weapon, that Yang Su-jin experienced yesterday, was a gun. He had the ability to fire a shotgun with the same accuracy as a pistol. Unfortunately for him, Yang Su-jin wouldn’t die unless her head was completely destroyed. “I used the boots from the eighth floor to avoid any tricky shots.”

“Still, wouldn’t it be hard to deal with him alone?”

“What? Aren’t you neglecting Ji-hee unni?”

“...Ji-hee?”

“Ji-hee unni used the wind to deflect the bullets. Thanks to Unni, he was more likely to hit himself with the bullets.” Yang Su-jin boasted proudly and Yoon Ji-hee just laughed shyly.

“I see.” I thought about Chang Ga-ram. Chang Ga-ram was able to use his icicles to incapacitate me. If someone learned magic and accumulated the skill, would the power gradually rise?

After hearing their story, I explained about the Merger Rights. Then I told them that it would be used by Jin Soo-young.

“What? Are you going to leave us?”

“Eh?”

Yang Su-jin’s eyes narrowed. “You know. I heard that the president had a daughter... You don’t need us anymore after getting such a great girl ~ it is like this.”

“What is that...?”

“... A joke.” Yang Su-jin poked out her tongue.

“Jeez, this woman...”

Yang Su-jin's expression suddenly froze. It was the same for me.

“...”

“...”

We both gazed towards Yoon Ji-hee. Yoon Ji-hee's face was pale enough to be painted white. Her eyes were huge and were shaking like there was an earthquake with a magnitude of 7 or higher. They looked like the eyes of a dead fish.

“...Kuk...no...”

“Ji-hee unni?”

“Ji-hee?”

“...Don't...” Suddenly, in the bomb shelter, a strong wind blew.
“Please don't throw me away...”

There were hiccups at the end as Yoon Ji-hee burst into tears. The wind became stronger.

“What the!?” The people still remaining in the bomb shelter were confused. The parked car shook slightly.

“Unni! It isn't like that!” Yang Su-jin grasped the situation and

hugged Yoon Ji-hee.

“It is a joke! I... No, we won’t get rid of Unni!”

Then she glanced at me. No, why did she joke like this in the first place?

“It is true. The both of you... You have value and aren’t worthless.”

The wind stopped, but Yoon Ji-hee’s eyes were still wide open. The tears stopped flowing but she looked like she could burst out crying again at any moment.

“Think about it. What would happen to Ji-hee if I integrate with Su-jin’s city? Will Ji-hee be able to come along with Su-jin?”

It wouldn’t change even if she could come along. Frankly speaking, there was no sense that Yoon Ji-hee would be profitable in reality. But I had experienced it on the ninth floor; Having sure companions in this dungeon would be a tremendous advantage.

“If so, I would rather you continue to be by Su-jin’s side.”

Yang Su-jin was strong enough to clear the ninth floor. In addition, her brain wasn’t too bad either. Like I just saw... Yoon Ji-hee’s abilities had reached this level so the two of them would be able to survive by working as a team.

“Of course, it’s dangerous. But after listening to your story about the ninth floor... I believe that both of you will grow and I can join you at a later time.”

“...”

“I trust in Ji-hee’s abilities... This is something that is possible.”

The wind stopped blowing completely. Behind Yoon Ji-hee, Yang Su-jin was making an ‘O’ shape with her fingers.

“I called both of you to check your safety in reality and to help with support before entering the dungeon. Absolutely never... I’m not talking about breaking apart this group.”

“... Yes.”

Yoon Ji-hee wiped away her tears. She seemed convinced.

I glared at Yang Su-jin.

“...”

As I patted Yoon Ji-hee’s shoulder, Yang Su-jin mouthed some words. ‘So why are you using that woman?’

I replied. ‘I don’t know yet.’

In the first place, this story only applied if Jin Soo-young accepted. After telling both of them to wait, I approached Director Oh again. The director spoke with an expression that was brighter than before.

“I told her father. It was a short call but the response was good.”

“...”

“Honestly, I feel less worried... Of course, if you think of taking advantage of Soo-young by using her as a hostage...”

Director Oh was serious. His age meant he had a lot of experience and was guarded, but there was one disadvantage. This man didn’t know everything about the dungeon. So he didn’t understand Jin Soo-young.

“Did Soo-young agree?”

“Huh?” He was surprised that I asked such a question. He thought she would surely accept the offer.

“You haven’t heard from her yet?”

“That’s right. Right now, Madam is having a conversation with her.”

She was a woman who became mad due to some ‘misfortune she suffered in the dungeon, only to kill a friend in reality and be trapped in a bomb shelter.’ What would Jin Soo-young be thinking? Until an hour ago, she hadn’t even been able to think clearly.

“This living space in the bomb shelter. Assign it to both of my people as well.”

“This isn’t a space that you can use easily.”

“But don’t I have to cure Soo-young’s mind? You can think of them as my ‘resources.’ If you want to continue working with me in the future then it is necessary.”

“...”

As we talked, the First Lady left the room with Jin Soo-young. “I have an official ceremony to attend... I’m really grateful. Student, thanks to you, I have Soo-young...”

“It isn’t a big deal. Rather, do you mind if I ask you something?”

“What is it?”

“I wanted to ask your permission, but I have some people with me. For the time being, I would like to be housed with Soo-young

alone.”

Director Oh and the First Lady’s expressions hardened.

“It sounds strange but it can’t be helped. I said that it can’t be cured, but the signs can be monitored. Can’t we look for a cure while watching what happens?”

There were CCTVs in the bomb shelter. If I did anything strange to Jin Soo-young, then they would know.

“I... If Soo-young can regain her spirit...”

“I will do so.”

“First of all, treating Soo-young is the most important thing. Of course, if she ends up hurt...” She spoke with the face of a mother protecting her daughter. “Don’t worry. I will personally persuade my husband.” She continued.

“Then... But if Soo-young says no then you don’t need to ask your husband. Anyway, it will be better if she can be treated in less time.”

They didn’t exactly understand the dungeon, but it was certain that minimizing damage caused by Soo-young would no longer be a problem. I passed Director Oh, who was smiling bitterly and entered the room with Jin Soo-young.

Jin Soo-young stood up.

I asked her, “Yes, have you thought about it?”

“...Yes.” She nodded with a determined face.

“Ah, let me tell you ahead of time.” I scratched my head. “In the end, the answer is fixed. It doesn’t matter even if Soo-young replies with a no.”

“...!!” Jin Soo-young looked at me with shock.

“If you raise your voice, then I will forcefully shut your mouth.”

“You...”

“I have a good excuse anyway. After explaining that you were crazy, I will drain your head until it is completely empty. Haven’t you experienced it once? What do you think will happen if I continue without stopping?”

As I was draining her, I felt a killing intent shooting from her. The killing intent wasn’t from her talent. It was because she saw me as an enemy. It was the same as the killing intent she sent from the beginning.

“If I think about it, there is something strange. You have a city

when you were like that.”

Could a person who couldn’t control herself really be able to gain a city? It might be possible to take a floor. But in order to gain a city in the dungeon, a minimum of reasoning power was needed. The reason was that clues needed to be gathered and a method reasoned out.

“That... There were no people...”

“I know because I have a unique talent. It changes the way that people think, but that is the end of it.”

I was still me. Having Atlas didn’t mean that I beat up everyone I encountered in my daily life. After getting Underdog, I didn’t run back and forth challenging people irresponsibly. Of course, what I was doing right now was a challenge.

“Having a strong impulse and following to that impulse are separate issues. Isn’t that right?”

“...Are you saying that I couldn’t endure what I did? Did you view it from my position?”

“I wondered if there was a ‘need’ to endure it in the first place.”

At that moment, her right hand shot forward. There was a sharp sound. The speed was so fast that I wouldn’t have noticed the movement. Of course, that was if I hadn’t already been paying

attention.

Tak.

“This...!”

“Once again, didn’t I say that raising your voice was a big deal?”

I whistled softly as I held her wrist. “Indeed. This is the best means to find the root of the murder. I was really disturbed by the description of your unique talent. There was nothing about your mind going away as a side effect.”

There was nothing about the side effects anywhere in the description of the talent.

I continued. “I’ve been thinking ever since. You were originally such a girl.”

“D-Do you know who my father is? You...”

“He is someone with a beautiful daughter, but she has such tastes. Did you kill someone in the dungeon and realize the real taste? You got a unique talent and sliced people in real life on the third and fourth days. Maybe they were people you met in the dungeon?”

Even if she settled things on the third day, she grew too much on

the fourth day. Director Oh and her parents used their power to cover up her mistakes, making it feel like a terrible tragedy was nothing. Therefore, she started thinking. While other people might know about her exact talent, no one knew exactly what she went through in the dungeon.

“If you pretend it was something to do with the dungeon, no one will know that you are such a girl.”

In fact, her parents had wandered exactly into her trap. It was easier to understand that something supernatural happened, then to think their child was born a murderer.

She muttered, “...You don’t have the evidence. It is all just guesses. You don’t know what I did to get here.”

“There should be CCTV evidence. Everybody is fooled so far, but what if I told them it was an act? They might think it is ridiculous, but if they look at the CCTV recordings, will they continue being fooled by your dirty actions?”

I was holding Jin Soo-young’s wrists.

The fact that she returned to her senses after the sacred creature ate her was because her consciousness scattered and she couldn’t concentrate on acting. In addition, she had puppy eyes because she had heard the conversation between me and Director Oh. If I thought about it differently, this girl wasn’t crazy.

“...”

Jin Soo-young bit her lip. Her eyes rolling nervously indicated her shaken mental state.

“Therefore, you can’t refuse my offer of merger even if you want to. Everyone thinks you are such a poor girl, so why wouldn’t you want a white knight?”

“...Son of a bitch.”

“You are the one who will be the dog.”

Of course, I had no intention of killing her for the time being. If I didn’t take her city here, then she would continue carrying out her gimmick and safely clear the dungeon. I would use her father’s power to put myself in an appropriate position until I gained enough strength. My plan was something like that.

“Now, take this.” It was the merger ticket. I offered it to her. “Do you still have hope? In the end, you are the princess I have to attend to. If you do your best, then I might be tamed.”

“I will kill you.”

“Uh huh. You will see blood if you try to bite a dog.” Well, on the contrary, it wouldn’t be bad if the dog tamed the princess.

Jin Soo-young looked into the air. The letter of merger appeared before her eyes.

Chapter 56 – Day 13, 10th Floor Demon

Jin Soo-young didn't immediately accept after receiving the request, but she didn't refuse.

Seuk.

Instead, she walked towards the door of the room and pushed the steel door with her hand.

Tang.

Once it closed, she locked it and headed to a corner of the room. I soon realized that it was a blind spot in the CCTV system. A lighter and cigarette emerged from a cabinet attached to the wall.

“Your parents gave you cigarettes?”

“...There are occasionally smokers among the people I killed.”

Of course, she had to act crazy so she couldn't be seen smoking peacefully. She took the cigarettes from the dead bodies. “Hoo.”

As expected for a dungeon exploration, her lung capacity meant that half the cigarette was gone with one suck. There was no tragic image in the appearance of Jin Soo-young who closed her eyes and belched out smoke. I had no prejudices towards smoking women. Yang Su-jin also smoked in front of me.

But Jin Soo-young was quite different. A decadent aura emerged as soon as she shook off her acting.

“Will you serve as my bodyguard while sucking out the honey?”

Jin Soo-young was a shield. While she survived, I could almost completely shake off any legal or physical problems in the real world. She asked, “Aren’t you being too greedy? Do you really think you can afford me?”

Jin Soo-young gazed at me with a provocative look and smiled. “I admit that you are good for recognizing that I’m not suffering, but can you really handle me? I’m telling you ahead of time, but as soon as my act reappears, I am going to kill you. As soon as we enter the dungeon, I will go after you and try to kill you.”

“...”

“Don’t take on something that you can’t handle. You should just accept the reward for treating me just now. But thanks to that, it made my act more natural.”

Chobeok.

I took a few steps. Then I extended my palms towards Jin Soo-young.

“What?”

“Doesn’t this apply to me as well? The CCTV blind spot?”

“Why...”

Pahat!

A light emerged from my palms and struck right next to Jin Soo-young’s head. This was a bomb shelter. Although the metal layer underneath couldn’t be pierced, the concrete surface behind Jin Soo-young completed caved in. Was it because she already had the thought? Jin Soo-young didn’t even react.

Tok.

The cigarette butt she was biting fell to the ground.

I smiled and said, “It won’t be that easy to catch me with your bare hands. Humans are still creatures who use tools. Isn’t that right?”

“...You can’t kill me.” Jin Soo-young muttered.

“I can’t. However, the second best thing is burning your limbs so that you are quiet for the rest of the day. Of course, it will be a different story if you cooperate.”

“...”

“There is a way to communicate with every person.”

I immediately approached her. I picked up the cigarette butt and threw it in the bin.

“A threatened dog will bite. You can’t get rid of it.”

[The merger request has been accepted.]

[The queen of ‘Vermouth’ has been annexed by the monarch of ‘Talia.’]

[‘City-Vermouth’ has been integrated in Talia’s territory.]

[The location coordinates have become synchronized with the monarch.]

The location coordinates were synchronized. It meant she wasn’t moved to the city. That seemed to be the case.

If she could attack, then attack. However, there was no attack as I walked to the closed door.

Ching.

The door was opened to reveal a confused Director Oh. Despite the door being closed, had the sound of the explosion leaked?

“What’s going on?”

“It’s not a big deal. There were some symptoms so I took care of it.”

I turned and looked at Jin Soo-young. Then I briefly winked.

Please take care.

The reconstruction was done quickly. The area where Yang Su-jin and Yoon Ji-hee were staying was supposed to be a laboratory. There were glass bottles filled with chemicals and simple experiments set up on the newly installed tables.

“Wah... This sort of thing... I never thought I would see it. No, frankly, I thought about it, but it was unrealistic. Even Ji-hee unni won’t be able to get these type of things...”

But it actually happened. Some of the chemicals and experiments could be brought into the dungeon by Yang Su-jin. She also had more drugs to combine, and could increase her talent experience.

“If you need anything then tell me.”

“...Aren’t we strong now?”

“Then.”

This bomb shelter was an invincible space. It wasn’t because of Yang Su-jin and Yoon Ji-hee, but because of the tough security to protect the VIP Jin Soo-young. In addition, even though points existed in the past, the points couldn’t be used on these chemicals for fear of them being noticed by the private sector. Therefore, it felt like ‘renting’ the chemicals.

Of course, points weren’t required either. Originally, I had planned on spending my points for all three people, but now it was on Jin Soo-young’s book.

Once it neared midnight, Yang Su-jin told me before heading off into different rooms. “There are surveillance cameras, but please still be careful. You don’t know what might happen when a man and woman are in the same place.”

“You shouldn’t be saying that to me.”

I laughed but Yang Su-jin just looked at me. Ah. Yang Su-jin looked at Yoon Ji-hee.

“...” Although it wasn’t as much as before, there was a dark shadow on her face.

Su-jin cried out, “T-Then have strength. Oppa! Fighting!”

“...”

“Unni should do it too! Fighting!”

“...Please be careful.” I said and started to leave.

Yoon Ji-hee spat out briefly just before I closed the steel door. “... Fighting.”

I waved my hand and headed for our room once the door closed. There was a bit of time left, so I headed to my private bedroom. I was carefully choosing the books I would carry into the dungeon. Then I heard the sound of footsteps heading towards me.

Jin Soo-young was standing on the threshold. She was in a bathrobe and water vapour was still rising from her skin.

“Is there something you wanted?”

“Didn’t you say it?” She pulled the towel covering her head away, revealing still wet hair. “Everybody has a different approach at communication.”

Like the towel covering her head, her bathrobe fell down. “I thought about it before. What is the right approach?”

To be honest, it wasn’t hard to resist her charm. I hadn’t seen many naked bodies in my life, but I could see it through the media or the Internet rather than reality. The expression on her face also wasn’t good enough to ‘seduce’ me. The slightly narrowed eyes were looking this way confidently.

“Let’s do it.”

“...” It was nothing new but I was a little surprised at her honesty.

“The dungeon will open soon.”

“There is still an hour. Isn’t that enough time?”

“Do you think there will be a significant change in that hour?”

Jin Soo-young shrugged. She didn’t care that the action shook her upper body as she moved towards me.

“Some things can happen in an hour.”

I made a calculation error. Jin Soo-young was far bolder than the sheltered girl I thought she was.

“It is necessary to worry? Even one hour can allow us to move together more smoothly. Or...”

Her eyes narrowed further. She boldly stated. “Are you scared? Do you think I will kill you while it is happening? Or are you afraid that something meaningful will happen in that hour?”

This was why I refused to have relationships. At the same time, there were two reasons for Jin Soo-young to try this.

I closed my book. As I got up from the bed, Jin Soo-young sighed with ridicule and raised a hand to poke my chest. “No courage...”

My mouth covered Jin Soo-young’s.

“...!”

A rough breath emerged as my tongue stimulated her mouth. She was at a loss. Her gazed dropped down to my mouth and she looked at me with embarrassment. I said, “I won’t deny what you are giving me.”

I didn’t care if she really tried to kill me during it or if something changed. I wouldn’t allow both situations. Then wasn’t the conclusion obvious? Late at night. I was a man. I also have an overly healthy body. There was no reason to resist an opportunity like this.

I wrapped my hands around Jin Soo-young’s waist and hips to

lift her and laid her on the bed. The smell of a familiar brand of body wash swept over me. As Jin Soo-young said, one hour was enough.

...Was it enough?

The 10th floor was an open space and the wind blowing was quite chilly. I had entered soon after I took a shower. I thought about wiping away the water.

It wasn't a floor but a dirt ground. There were sand, stones and sparse plants scattered around. An outdoor area. I saw a light from far away. Mountain? Or maybe a tower. I couldn't guess the shape because the distance was quite far, but it was lit up and quite high.

"Let's go over there." I looked behind me.

"...."

"Hey."

"...Uh!" Jin Soo-young jumped at my voice.

"Let's go over there. Or run away like you said before."

"...U-Understood."

Jin Soo-young moved next to me as I walked. She touched her head. She had laid down before the water dried properly, so her hair was a mess.

“There was plenty of time to wash. Isn’t that uncomfortable?”

“...I don’t know.”

“Well, you are free to do what you like.”

As I got closer to where the light was coming from, the shape started to become slightly clearer. It was a mountain. A castle that resembled the castles of old Europe was surrounded by towering icicle shaped mountains. The lights were distributed evenly between the mountains and the plains. It meant people were residing there. The scale indicated that there were more people than the Tellans living in the forest.

“If you know they are Tellans, don’t attack first as I want to talk to them.”

“...” Jin Soo-young didn’t agree or deny my words but I didn’t care.

She suddenly asked me, “...Aren’t you acting really casual?”

“What?”

“You really do feel nothing. Maybe I am just conscious but...”

I tapped a finger.

Clack!

Jin Soo-young’s eyes widened at the sound. “What...?”

“Think about where we are now.” I gazed at Jin Soo-young with narrowed eyes. “It is you who offered yourself. You were the one who made the calculations, so don’t be so annoying about it.”

“A-Am I annoying?”

“Then what? Unfortunately, but I think that was the last chance for you to get me in your bed.”

Killing intent emerged from Jin Soo-young. Her face was flushed.

“You... Even if you want to, I won’t...”

“This is getting annoying.” I waved my hands and started walking again.

“Strike my back. Or follow. Just pick one of them.” Whether Jin Soo-young followed me or not, I headed towards the nearest light.

-I smell something.

As I thought, the sacred creature was a good detector. As soon as I entered the 10th floor, the sacred creature told me that it could smell desires.

-Several tasteless things... And there is one that is less tasteless.

It meant there was one strong person and several weak ones. If they were Tellans, then they weren't opponents that could harm me. I moved in the direction that the sacred creature pointed as quickly as possible. If the Tellans lived in the castle then I would reach out and offer them citizenship.

While running quickly, one man entered my sight. It was an explorer. His eyes were wide open. Blood was pouring from the explorer's mouth. A spear was protruding through his chest.

“What?”

“Another person!”

Tellans were behind him. I could tell that there were more than 20 of them just by looking. Unlike those seen in the forest, these Tellans were armed with a spear and metal armor. I didn't hesitate to offer them citizenship. Words simultaneously appeared in front of their eyes.

But... “Demon!”

“Kill! Be sure to kill it!”

Their reaction was different than I anticipated.

Chapter 57 – Day 13, 10th Floor Big Picture

(1)

A little while ago. “You should know that joining hands has a lot of meaning.”

Four hours before entering the dungeon. In one section of the bomb shelter, I was having dinner with Director Oh. It was to coordinate things like minor discipline and requirements in the future.

“I’m aware of that.”

“Really?” He wasn’t asking because he thought I didn’t know. It was because it was an issue that was bound to make him worried.

“Up until the fourth and fifth days, our thoughts about the situation were focused on fatalities. Due to an unspecified number of people becoming stronger than ordinary people, there was an indiscriminate number of murders.”

I was reminded of that a few times. Of course, it was the biggest problem of having the dungeon tied to society. But that wasn’t the biggest problem that would be faced in the future.

Director Oh continued, “The growth of the explorers... The degree of growth is far beyond what we had originally expected. Just the growth between the seventh and eighth days... Kim Tae-hyun’s physical abilities were already beyond the Olympic level.

The video of you in the hallway yesterday... If your speed was converted to 100 metres, it is almost twice as fast as the current world record.”

It was similar to the problem of purchasing the latest computer or phone. The gap could also be seen as the difference between how well people cleared the floors.

“Some people are already starting to show impatience. People like you can go anywhere.”

To me, the three most excellent stats were muscle strength, stamina and reflexes. At 23, 21 and 21 respectively, the upward momentum was slower, but it didn’t stop. What about the spirit, rather than the body? I could fully comprehend a book of programming in less than 20 seconds.

“Is Director one of those people?”

“To be honest, I have been skeptical a few times. I was also curious. Let’s say the problem of safety is completely solved and people like you are reborn under the strict protection of the dungeon.”

Director Oh swallowed his saliva. “Then what will you become in the end? Even if you don’t kill people blindly, what impact will you have on the world?”

Director Oh spoke with a heavy expression. I faintly realized it.

At least in this country, a handful of people like Director Oh had thought about this.

Of course, the default policy was to strictly control us. But there were limits to how much we could be controlled. Once the ability of an explorer exceeded a critical point, they might not be controlled, but become the person in control. Once that realization was reached, a person would end up with one of two options.

Director Oh explained. “This is just a hypothesis, it isn’t certain. Judging from my personal experience, I can guess in advance how different countries will behave. Let me tell you what I think... Countries like China and Japan will have identified the situation better than us. It isn’t this type of informal cooperation between you and I, but support from a national level...”

“They will eliminate problems at national level.”

“Exactly.”

Those countries would give full support. Or, if there was a immeasurable threat, get rid of it altogether.

When I thought about it, I wouldn’t have been particularly positive to those two approaches. It was because they hadn’t yet grasped the full situation. Kim Tae-hyun’s visit and my presence at this place was due to Director Oh’s discretion.

Director Oh spoke. “Jin Soo-young’s father...”

“You still won’t call him the president?”

“It is burdensome. In some ways, it feels like a jinx.”

Director Oh pushed the lunch wrappers to the side and placed both hands on the table.

“In any case, her father is expecting something similar. His wife just seems worried. However, he might be delighted that his daughter is an explorer.”

“Is his daughter going to be a super secret murder weapon?”

Director Oh frowned at the joke. “She is a powerful individual. If he uses political propaganda, then she would be called the perfect superhuman.”

“...”

“If a country supports the explorers, they are probably doing it due to this thought.”

Maybe, unlike his wife, the president might be aware that his daughter was acting differently. It wasn’t just to prevent the public from criticizing his daughter, but a personal project. It might be awkward, but I didn’t think all of this security was to protect her. Furthermore, the daughter who later became a superhero could be

used for himself. Well, this was just a guess.

“So do you want me for something like that?”

“I thought about it when I saw you. In the end, it is something that you will have to face.”

Of course. But it hadn't reached that point yet. I was just a university student in my early 20s. Even if the heads recognized me as a problem, using large scale national power on me wasn't realistic.

Eventually though, it would happen. I disliked having someone standing above me. I would live as I wanted without being bound to anyone. This was my driving force.

10 days ago, it would have been naive if I wanted to go against authority. I wasn't a graduate student, the parents of the students I privately tutored hadn't paid my fees for a few months and I didn't have a strong reputation among the seniors.

But now? I didn't need to worry about those things. It was natural that I would finish this semester with top grades. Money problems? Before entering the dungeon, I was inexperienced, but I had outsourced work as an amateur developer. Now I could tap the keyboard and get the job done 10 times faster.

Then was the conflict around me over? No. There was even more at the top. Even I didn't know that I would climb so fast.

“I don’t know if Soo-young can go to the end, but personally, I don’t think she has that ability.”

I asked, “Uh. Isn’t this conversation a bit dangerous?”

“Are you going to tell?”

Director Oh laughed. I naturally had no intention of doing that.

“You see, this is what my department is. Twisting my body for national interests. Kim Tae-hyun is still alive, so there isn’t a problem with intelligence right now, but after a few days, everyone will make a fuss over the fact that we have no explorer.”

“I’m not going to be Director-nim’s portfolio.”

“I don’t want that. However, I think you are safer as a blank slate than a serial killer whose father is the president.”

In other words, I was brought here through Director Oh’s own decision.

When I first met Director Oh, he realized that I can be used advantageously. I didn’t have any social connections. Thus, there was nothing to lose. There was also no ambition. Of course, there was greed, but my background and experience meant it wouldn’t lead me to a large scale ambitions. My father wasn’t the president

or a chaebol.

“After tonight, once you come out... There will be verification.”

“Verification?”

“It is a simple test of your body’s abilities, brain, personality and aptitude. You see it as numbers right?”

“That’s right.”

“But we have no way of knowing this... You could lie as needed. Hide or inflate things. Due to this, we need to verify your figures.”

Director Oh once again pulled out his electronic cigarette, but the cartridge was empty.

“Of course, this is one-sided information, so you don’t need to answer if you don’t want to. We still have Soo-young so we can offer her the necessary supplies in her current situation.” Director Oh rose from his chair. “But think about it. You haven’t fully grown, and your mind isn’t good enough yet.”

Then he held out a hand for me to shake. “It was a hectic day.”

“But thanks to that, things became faster.”

“I look forward to the future. Of course, the best thing for me will be for Kim Tae-hyun to become even stronger than you tonight.”

It was hard to say that there was no chance of that happening.

Director Oh asked me, “I heard that the purpose of the dungeon is to make an emperor.”

“Yes.”

“Maybe it is an accurate word, but it isn’t always possible in a world like this. There is no way someone can become an emperor here.”

Since childhood, I wasn’t the delusional type. I didn’t want to become an popular celebrity, sports star or the president.

Anyway, Director Oh headed to the bomb shelter. From there, the process leading up to midnight had already been described. Yang Su-jin and Yoon Ji-hee gave me encouragement and that incident happened with Jin Soo-young...

Now, I was thinking about the word ‘Emperor.’

Chaeng! Chaeng! Chaeng!

It sounded like cymbals being hit. One of the Tellans was tapping a thin sheet of metal.

Then in the darkness, noises were heard and more people with spears appeared.

“Kill!”

There were no questions asked as they aimed the spears at me. This place was different from the forest.

Perhaps there was a leader or it was a more advanced society. The Tellans already knew that the letters represented an offer of citizenship. They intuitively understood the phrases. Therefore, just knowing Tellan made it easy to recruit the people in the forest.

But now, they called me a demon, so it was hard to understand this drastic reaction. No, it was a reaction that only came out once the words appeared.

Hwik!

I spread back and raised my palm while narrowly avoiding a spear aimed at my head.

Tang!

A light flashed and one person in the front collapsed. The reaction was encouraging. Rather than pouncing at me in unison, they stared at me with a mixture of fear and confusion. I didn't miss that gap. An explosion occurred in the space where the man fell down. Although clearly trained, the Tellans couldn't respond immediately to unexpected situations.

I firmly shoved at the chest of someone on my left with both palms. Then I aimed a fly kick at the one on my right. They were attacks that demonstrated power rather than practicality, but I realized how to deal with large groups based on previous experience: Kill some and the solidarity between the others would weaken.

“...Uh...”

The fear from the first explosion gradually spread as I raised my palm at an angle. I didn't aim at anyone but shot out the biggest and loudest explosion possible.

Peng!

With that, the situation was over. There were cries and noises heard as they escaped. Soon they disappeared from my sight and the voices gradually faded.

“Aren't you going to slice me?” I asked Jin Soo-young who was a small distance behind me. The process of contacting and fighting the Tellans was also a method of provoking her to attack me. Looking back, I could see a deadly weapon in her hand, She had an

expression of a child wanting to eat the sweets put in front of them. The ingredient that caused conflict wasn't appetite and self-restraint, but desire and fear.

I continued, "Well, you are better at suppressing yourself than I thought."

"...S...Shut up."

If she rushed over, I was going to show her an overwhelming defeat. I wouldn't kill her, but would make her hesitant to repeat the same behaviour. It was already much better than I thought.

"Can you speak Tellan?" I asked.

"Yes."

"What do you think?" I pointed to the Tellans on the ground and to the castle on the mountain.

"Kill. Everyone." As I narrowed my eyes, she added a few more words. "You offered them citizenship, right? That's why you were called a 'demon.' So there is an 'education' that makes people who offer citizenship 'demons'? It is based on a religion?"

"Go on."

"Already in my... Now it is your city, but there are people living

there. If you add these people here, then wouldn't a cult obviously form? It would be lucky if it wasn't called hell."

She covered her head and pulled out a cigarette and lighter. She covered it so the light of the cigarette wouldn't be seen in the darkness. As she blew out smoke, Jin Soo-young finished her words.

"Religion isn't the answer. If you are going to occupy this place, then it would be best to clean it up before eating." Jin Soo-young's eyes flashed as she said this. "If you do that, then I can help you."

I could understand. The reason why Director Oh said 'no' despite Jin Soo-young's background.

I also agreed.

Chapter 58 – Day 13, 10th Floor Big Picture

(2)

–I smell something in front.

Even if I didn't study him very much, the use of the sacred creature was obvious. The sacred creature recognize anyone with desires as food. In a nutshell, he could detect enemies in the darkness.

“...”

“If you have a complaint then say it immediately.”

I said while looking back to see Jin Soo-young making a dour expression. We were getting closer to the castle, but the feast of blood and flesh that she wanted didn't happen. After the first encounter, I used the sacred creature's sense of smell to approach the castle without meeting any Tellans.

Jaaeng. Jaaeng. Jaaeng.

I could hear the sound of banging coming from every direction. The people who escaped probably weren't looking for me with reinforcements, but rather dealing with other ‘demons.’ Perhaps we weren't the only explorers on this floor.

As I reached the mountain, I looked up. The slope wasn't gentle.

There might be a separate uphill path to the entrance, but the one in front of me was a cliff that was almost at a right angle. I could see light from the wall above me.

“Surely you aren’t going to climb up?” Jin Soo-young asked with an expression of disgust.

“I seem to be repeating this three times, but I don’t intend to force you. If you want to kill something then go on alone.”

“Oh, I don’t feel like it.”

I started to climb. I concentrated my power on my fingers and toes and moved using the cliff protrusions. The height was approximately five floors and I checked my stamina. It was the first time I tried rock climbing and it was the height of a high rise apartment. Once I was at a height of one floor up, Jin Soo-young looked up at me and called out.

“Is there really a need to kill the boss?”

I climbed the cliff without answering. The surface of the cliff was gradually changing to bricks.

“You are trying to fight a religion. Even if the command system collapses, there is a possibility that it will actually have an adverse effect on the lower ranks.”

I continued steadily without answering. Iek. A sound was heard.

It was the sound of stones crumbling as Jin Soo-young started climbing.

“...Don’t ignore people who you slept with.”

“It is fairly creative that you found a reason not to be ignored.”

“Is there any other reason?”

“I don’t know what type of experience you had, but there are many reasons to ignore people that I’ve slept with. Their character. Or their character.”

“What...!?”

Before an answer came back, I jumped in a window that the light was coming from. It was a corridor without any people. There was nothing different from a movie based on old Europe. I just felt like this place was more damp and older than the movies.

There wasn’t a clear route, so I let the sacred creature smell again. Only this time, I had it find the target with the strongest smell within its range.

-A delicious smell! Two of them!

If this guy said ‘delicious smell’ then it only meant one thing. There had to be an explorer.

‘The same as me?’

-Yes. There are two.

They were on the move right now. They weren’t close to me, but I got a sense of the direction they were heading. I slightly changed my order.

Chose the best smell among those that don’t have a delicious aroma of a unique talent.

There was one above me. It exactly matched the direction that the two with unique talents were heading.

“In the end, people think the same.”

I muttered as I turned my head to one side of the corridor. A Tellan had walked around the corner and was looking at me with astonishment. The suppression was instant.

“I am a demon.”

“...!”

Indescribable terror filled the man’s eyes. His reaction to my joke was huge.

“Now I will remove my palm from your mouth. If you make a small noise then I will kill your family and drink all of your blood.”

“Crazy bastard.” Jin Soo-young said from behind me.

I ignored her and asked a question. The presence of the ‘stairs’ here and what people ate. Specifically, the number of resources that could be harvested. He was afraid but due to that, the answer emerged quite smoothly. And at that moment...

“... Really useless. This place.” Although it wasn’t exact, Jin Soo-young’s words expressed everything.

The resources were moss that grew without light and groundwater. Specifically, this place didn’t have any resources. According to the lord of the castle, approximately 2,000 people lived here. That was all.

There were no treasures in the castle or secret places. Except for the warehouse where simple armor and weapons were stored, the moss was what they ate as fuel. It was obviously inferior compared to the Kasava of the forest.

I was able to see clearly due to the light from the hallway. The equipment and hygiene were better here, but the development and resources of the forest were much better. It was enough to say that the people here were malnourished.

“A barren wasteland and 2,000 religious fanatics... Well, there is even a lord. I don’t think there is anything to gain from here.” Jin Soo-young nodded as she talked. “There aren’t even treasures or secret places. I will... What, you aren’t killing them?”

“Yes.”

Jin Soo-young stared with outrage as I knocked out the man in the corridor. “Just throw him out the window. If you get caught later, then it will be annoying. Can’t you just kill him?”

“No.”

“...Why?”

“I don’t need to touch his life.”

“Ha!” Hrmm. Jin Soo-young laughed before leaning her head out the window.

“How funny.”

Below the window, lights were running around. There were the sounds of gongs like fierce battles were occurring elsewhere.

“I thought you were a broken sociopath, but you’re human after all? Pretending to have principles but changing that behaviour every time...”

I stared at Jin Soo-young. Jin Soo-young jumped at my gaze.

“W-What? Am I lying?”

“I’m going. Don’t follow if you don’t want to.”

I walked down the corridor and stunned any Tellans that I met. As I lay them down in a corner, she repeated. “It really doesn’t make any sense.”

Jin Soo-young was confused but she kept following after me. We crossed the hall and climbed the spiral staircase. Once we got close to the top floor that was my goal, I didn’t need to hear Jin Soo-young’s whining anymore. It was because the Tellans were already dead.

“This...”

I ignored the surprised Jin Soo-young and kept walking along the blood trail. There were vague screams from afar. The rooms where the lord of the castle stayed had their doors and ceilings beautifully decorated. But now they were just covered in blood. The screams were coming from a door that was cracked open.

They were the screams of a ‘child’ and a woman.

Before opening the door, I looked at Jin Soo-young. “From now

on, follow my lead.”

“...”

“Or just run away now.”

I half opened the door. There were two explorers in the middle of working. The spacious room was filled with the bodies and blood of the Tellans. There were two people alive. One woman was strapped to a chair and was in a severe condition. One eye was swollen, her teeth were pulled out and her mouth was filled with blood.

Yet, it seemed like the people torturing her couldn't get the answers they wanted. The two explorers were now working on a boy in his mid teens. He looked clean compared to the woman, but one arm was hanging limply. The other arm was being held by a hulking man. The woman was his sister or his mother. She screamed as the boy was tortured.

“Are there any results?”

When asked, “#%@^^@##%.”

There was an answer in a language I couldn't speak. Chinese. Mandarin? The number of explorers had been reduced, so it seemed like the dungeon matching system now connected it to overseas explorers.

I worried about it for a moment. Should I speak in English? But... there was one language that everyone in this room would certainly know.

“Release those two.” I spoke in Tellan. The answer came back quickly. It was from a scrawny man beside the woman, rather than the big man holding the boy’s arm. If his hair grew just a little bit longer then he might be mistaken as a woman.

“...North? Or is it the south?”

“Of course, it’s the north.”

“...” The little guy beckoned. Then the big person dropped the boy he was holding. If this was a manhwa, they were like Vegeta and Nappa from Dragon Ball Z. Unfortunately, these guys weren’t from a manhwa. The two people gradually took positions around me.

I said, “They don’t speak no matter how you torture them, yet you don’t leave this floor. There must be treasure here.”

The first impression was that the little one was a little stronger, but it was confusing since the big guy rarely opened his mouth. The little one continued speaking in English.

“I killed one South Korean person on this floor. His ability was manure in front of China.” He was obviously trying to provoke me. I knew what he was doing already, so I didn’t get angry.

“Do you know who this is?” I glanced backwards. Jin Soo-young, who was looking at me from a distance, responded to my words by flinching. “She is the daughter of the president of South Korea. Even if you are supported by the country, she is in a different class.”

“Hey. What...”

Jin Soo-young’s eyes became bigger. The eyes of the two Chinese men also widened.

As Director Oh said, they received support from the Chinese government. Furthermore, they were talented enough to have unique talents, so it was almost certain that their country was supporting them.

“There is no need to fight. Will it be fun for you if you mess with us? If you don’t want diplomatic issues, then let’s settle this through conversation!”

I thought about it. It was normal to know the face of the president of a neighbouring country, but would they know his daughter’s face? That’s why I asked Director Oh to give me simple profile pictures of domestic chaebols and high ranking officials tomorrow. I had already proven that I could make social connections in the dungeon.

“...%\$%%@.”

They said that they met Koreans already.

“\$@#\$. ”

“&%5.”

I didn't know I would meet with the Chinese, but if they knew there was the possibility of meeting Koreans, wouldn't they know the faces of high-ranking Korean people?

“This is crazy! What just...” As soon as Jin Soo-young was about to come this way,

Pahat!

The two people moved.

“Young Lady! Run!” I cried out like a loyal bodyguard and blocked the path of the two men. Of course, I heard the sound of Jin Soo-young escaping. The two Chinese also heard the sound.

The small one held a sword. The big one held an axe.

They played like Chinese people. The combination attack was almost perfect. The big one swung his axe at a tremendous speed. I avoided it a few times then let a shallow strike hit my side.

“Keuk!” The little guy stabbed his sword at me and used the gap where I avoided it to break through.

Bam!

The big man struck me with the side of the axe and I was thrown to one wall.

“\$#@%%\$%!!” The little man shouted and the big one nodded. Then the little one ran out the door.

Perhaps he said ‘I will chase the woman and you finish the one here.’ The level of movements I showed was easily dealt with by one person.

“A shame.”

“...You speak Korean?”

“I’m not good.” The opponent gazed at me with serious eyes and grabbed his axe with both hands. He continued, “You are strong.”

“You too. Don’t feel resentment. You have come this far alone. You will soon realize that it is enough.”

The big man said while attacking. The heavy axe was fast and accurate. The lion was using all its power to catch a rabbit. My

body was exactly in the middle of the axe's path. I didn't even bother to avoid it.

To be precise, I didn't need to.

Tak!

“...!?”

It wasn't as easy as I thought. Even if I grabbed the bottom correctly, it was difficult to take the weight of a fully swung axe with one hand.

“How...?”

“The only thing that was real is the fact that she's the president's daughter.”

If I didn't show any weaknesses, these guys would have handled me 2:1. I didn't want to fight against two people whose power I was unsure about. In addition, even if it was possible, Jin Soo-young might try to stab me in the back. This was killing two birds with one stone.

“Don't feel resentment.”

I repeated what he said before. I pushed the axe with my hand. I hesitated for a moment before gritting my teeth.

Since he was considerate towards me, I would do my best to return the favor.

Chapter 59 – Day 13, 10th Floor Big Picture

(3)

It was the last move of the fight.

“Kuk...!” I kicked the big man in the abdomen, causing him to kneel down. Blood flowed from his open mouth towards the ground. His internal organs were destroyed, so the damage was much higher than the bleeding showed.

“Strong.” A look of pure admiration crossed my face.

There was a diagonal cut across my face. It wasn’t very deep, but I couldn’t use one eye right now.

To be honest, I had to admit that I looked down on him. He was strong in this fight. The big guy using his axe had almost reversed who was strong and who was weak. I was augmented using the techniques of Ravenous Wolf Fist, but the big guy definitely had a technique that enhanced his power and speed.

It might have been dangerous if I didn’t have the leech’s bloodsucking ability. If I hadn’t avoided it with my superior reflexes, the wound on my face might be 2 cm deeper.

“Great... How resourceful.” It might be due to his Korean being poor, but the big man sounded like the main character from a Chinese historical drama.

“...Kill me.”

In fact, I wanted to end it neatly. “I’m sorry, but wait a little bit.”

“...?!”

After kicking his arms, I raised my hand to his head. Then I said to the sacred creature. “Eat.”

Even though it wasn’t until the ‘root’ of the desire, I wanted the sacred creature to eat until the big guy couldn’t even think for a few hours.

“\$\$@#%\$@%!!!” A scream in Chinese emerged from the big one’s mouth. I pulled my hand away from his head.

‘Have you figured out the delicious part of this person?’

-Swinging the axe.

‘...And?’

-Axe. Keep swinging. He wants to swing it.

One policy I set was to find out the unique talent before eating a person. Atlas alone certainly helped me a lot, but it had a colossal impact on my values and decision making. It was also one of the

numerous reasons why I didn't eat Jin Soo-young. Even though I could tolerate it, I didn't want the basic thought of 'I want to kill a person' attached to me. So the sacred creature would have a 'taste' and measure what the person's strongest desire was.

'It is just wielding the axe?'

-Uh... And, moving strangely...

The problem was that the sacred creature had the expressiveness of an infant. I studied the big guy's face for a while. It was completely blank now, but that guy had been very serious when fighting. Even though he was weaker than me, he enjoyed everything about it.

"I believe you." After praising him, I ended it.

[Axe Technique. Lv 9. 23567/25600]

Just killing the one with the axe greatly increased my experience from Lv 4. When considering that 2400 was the sum of the experience at Lv 3, it was a tremendous amount of experience that was more than 10 times larger. Even my Punching talent was only at Lv8.

[Unique talent has been acquired.]

‘Crazy bastard! I’ll kill him!’ Jin Soo-young cursed Kim Hee-chul as she kept running. ‘But... It was quite loud before.’

When she first ran away, she looked back because there was a thud. She saw Kim Hee-chul get thrown by something and hit the wall. ‘Is he dead now?’

Jin Soo-young thought it was possible. If the enemies didn’t think it was possible then one wouldn’t be chasing her in the first place. As Jin Soo-young realized what she was feeling, she stopped moving for a moment.

‘Crazy! Why at this time?’ However, her stamina was already near the bottom. She restored her breathing as she looked around the corridor. There was a door on the right side. ‘Please don’t have anyone in it.’ Jin Soo-young prayed as she opened the door and slipped in.

“Kyaak!” The Tellan woman hiding inside shrieked. Dammit. Jin Soo-young cursed under her breath.

But there was no point in murdering her.

“...Such a bother.”

The small Chinese man opened the door after hearing the woman

scream. Then Jin Soo-young realized that there was a window in the corner of the room. However, the Chinese man also realized it as he stepped sideways to block her access to the window.

“Hah.”

Now she had to fight. She felt resigned and took out her weapon.

Clang.

It was a chain. She hadn't taken it out during her fight with Hee-chul because she had to seem crazy, but this weapon made Jin Soo-young's fights go much more smoothly

It was the Chinese man who moved first. His sword seemed to dance as he stabbed at her belly.

‘Eh?’

She avoided it and threw the weight at one end of the chain sickle. Jin Soo-young soon realized that something was strange. ‘What the, he isn't a big deal!’

To be precise, she could easily see his strikes. In this state, he was much weaker than her. Then why had Hee-chul been struggling? Was the big Chinese man much stronger than this one?

“Ugh!” As Jin Soo-young thought this, the Chinese man groaned.

His swordsmanship was good, but Jin Soo-young's chain sickle was flamboyant enough to overwhelm it. In addition, it wasn't just Jin Soo-young's weapon.

Chaeng!

She swung the end and hit the sword, while the sickle pierced straight through the gap. This ended it.

As the Chinese man was conscious of the sickle heading for his head, he allowed her to kick his body twice. This was the result of her talent that showed her the best route to subdue the opponent. She was able to instinctively move in a complex manner during the fight, something that was mostly possible for experienced fighters.

"Sheesh." Although she missed a critical strike, Jin Soo-young swung his chain sickle again. It was a design from a few centuries ago, but if it had been a little larger then she would've stabbed him in the neck. Jin Soo-young being taller than the small Chinese man helped a lot.

"Little bastard." Jin Soo-young spat out the phlegm caused by smoking and said. That was her mistake. Even if the language was different, it was obvious that he had picked up some parts.

"..."

"Do you understand? This kid's face is turning red."

“...Damn bitch.” The Chinese man rushed at her and the attacks that Jin Soo-young received were different from before.

Chaeng!

“Ack!” The chain that pulled tightly to block the blade vibrated many times. The skin of her palm was peeled away by the vibration of the chain. He had suddenly become stronger. His power and speed had doubled from what they previously were.

“%%@%!!!”

The bloodshot eyes reminded her of when she had been acting crazy. However, the sophistication of the sword that split through the air didn’t decrease even a little bit.

“W-What the?”

Even Hee-chul wouldn’t be able to avoid it easily. However, her nerves were tight and she somehow managed to avoid the sword... The real problem wasn’t Jin Soo-young’s strength but her stamina. If there hadn’t been the unnecessary chase, she might have been able to cope with this suddenly changing situation.

But that hadn’t happened. Her stamina was less developed than her reflexes, meaning she was already breathing heavily. It wasn’t just the enemy in front of her, but anxiety that Hee-chul could join and kill her at any time. Being cool-headed in this type of emergency wasn’t a common skill. It was the big advantage that

Hee-chul had over Jin Soo-young.

Finally, the blade swiped past and cut her knee. At the same time, numerous people popped up in her head.

Their images revolved around her like a kaleidoscope.

‘I will die.’ In the end, the genius murderer was still a mere creature. Her whole body and eyes spasmed with fear. As the Chinese man kicked her belly a few times, she just wanted him to end it quickly.

Jin Soo-young closed her eyes.

“Mother.” She muttered as she felt the small wind caused by the blade.

Tang!

There was a sound resembling a gunshot. “You came too far down.”

Hee-chul’s voice was heard from the window. After having the sacred creature smell her position, he had climbed down the cliff.

Duk.

As Hee-chul entered the room through the window, he frowned as he stared at the short Chinese man. “Why are your eyes like that?”

“...You killed Yan?”

“I guess? Am I not right here in front of you?” Hee-chul shook his head and glanced at Jin Soo-young. “Hold on for a moment.”

“...”

Jin Soo-young understood the reason Hee-chul had been thrown to one side when she ran away. Now Hee-chul could overwhelm the little man who had been weakened. Hee-chul was killing two birds with one stone.

“Dog... The same... Bastard...”

It was uncomfortable. But at the same time, she was relieved. She didn’t feel any pangs in her stomach.

Was it the joy from surviving? Perhaps.

The man watched Hee-chul as he picked up his sword from the floor. The sword had been what was hit by the explosion, so the Chinese man had no injuries at all. Hee-chul didn’t attack until he had picked up the sword and lowered his posture again.

“You... Are you looking down on me?” The Chinese man asked.

“Huh?”

There was a sound. “Aha.” Hee-chul narrowed his eyes like he realized something. He said, “Of course. You look soft and easy.”

“...!!”

He shouldn’t do that. Jin Soo-young tried to say. Every time the Chinese man was mocked, he unleashed a tremendous power.

“%#@%@!!!” Hee-chul wasn’t able to understand the words as the little man swung his sword. Just like what happened in Jin Soo-young’s case, his power and speed had doubled. However, the sword still didn’t lose its sophistication.

“It’s great, but...” Hee-chul’s eyes calmly read the trajectory of the real sword among the myriad of fakes.

Neither the Chinese man or Jin Soo-young wouldn’t have thought that Hee-chul would dare to stick his finger in the blade of the sword.

“Indeed, your talent is likely to be damaging if I eat it.”

“...!!!”

Hee-chul's hand held the blade. Just a few minutes ago, he had caught a big axe, but there was a difference in the speed and movement of an axe and a sword...

[Unique Talent – No.008. Warrior]

[Through a constant desire to become stronger, constantly develop your techniques and reach a higher place. In a rationally advanced civilization, it would be natural for martial artists to lose their status. But what should you do? This type of romance is an instinct for you.]

[Comprehension of body/ weapon related martial arts has increased to the maximum. The same applies to the techniques of others.]

[Self-improvement of body/weapon related martial arts is possible.]

“Your friend was kind enough to give this to me.”

It was how Hee-chul could predict such a dazzling trajectory so easily. The Chinese man tried to act, but it was impossible. Maybe it was a lesson learned or his new talent impacting his senses, but Hee-chul didn't give the man a second chance.

Wooduk!

A neat hand grabbed the Chinese man's neck lightly enough to prevent death. It was a bold yet amazingly accurate adjustment of his strength. "It was too much for you to deal with this one." As the Chinese man started foaming at the mouth, Hee-chul stood in front of Jin Soo-young.

"Ohu... Hey."

"...Bas...bastard."

"Blood is dripping down... Is it possible to stand up with that knee? It would be good if you have some regeneration abilities." Hee-chul talked to Jin Soo-young as he pulled her up.

"Let go... This..."

"If you say it one more time then I really will do it."

"..."

"Now let's see what it looks like."

Hee-chul left the collapsed Chinese man on the floor and headed up the stairs. He planned to go back to the top. The Chinese hadn't noticed, but the treasure of this floor was there.

Chapter 60 – Day 13, 10th Floor Big Picture

(4)

The two people on the top floor were in the same state as they were before. Perhaps these two were the owners of the castle. Outside the window, the noisy sounds of fighting were still continuing. It might be because the Chinese had wiped out most of the people in the castle, but it seemed like the tragedy inside wasn't known yet. It was better to get this done before it became louder.

“Si... Sister Sis...”

“Oh, she is your sister?”

The boy groaned and stood up as I untied him. After all, it was only one arm that was broken. His legs trembled due to fear.

“B... B... Bad people...”

“Not demons?” The boy looked at me with an expression like he didn't understand my words.

“What is your name?”

“...”

I pulled out a bottle from my inventory. It was the potion taken

from Kim Tae-hyun that I hadn't used much of. Now there wasn't much left. I poured a small drop on my finger, forced the boy's mouth opened and shoved it in.

“Ugh... Kek... Keok...”

Did he think that he was eating poison? Then the boy felt something and he touched his broken arm. I asked, “Has the pain gone away? The bones should be recovering.”

The boy took one step back and stood in front of his sister. She was hidden but I could hear constant groaning.

“If you give me a good answer then I will drop the same thing into your sister's mouth.”

“Crazy. Dog scum...” It wasn't a good answer, but then Jin Soo-young spoke.

“You had such a thing... Give me a little...”

I ignored her and looked at the boy, who shrugged his shoulders.

“I am... Kino.” Even though he was crying a lot, he quickly grasped the situation. The boy, Kino, continued speaking. “W-We have no treasure. I told those people earlier several times. We just inherited this castle and the residents...”

“Ah. I don’t care about that.”

“...?”

I interrupted and checked that the woman hadn’t stopped breathing before continuing. “To the people below, you taught them that we are ‘demons’.”

The offer of citizenship appeared in front of Kino. Even though he was startled, Kino didn’t show much amazement on his face. I couldn’t find any signs of religious fear or horror.

“Did the rule of rejecting people like us first begin in your generation?”

“Nope... No. I heard that...”

“Oh, you don’t need to explain in detail. What I really want to ask is the reason for such an education.”

Sometimes the ruling class themselves were brainwashed by the myths and propaganda that they created, but I couldn’t find any signs of that in the child in front of me. It was evidence that there was a purpose for that rule being created and taught.

Kino explained. “The words in front of me... If I respond to this ‘revelation’ then I know that our land will be merged with yours. I learned that from my father and so on.”

“So?”

“But... I learned that the result of such a unification has always been hopeless.”

Through my experience in the jungle, I knew that several explorers had visited the dungeon before ‘our world.’ So it was natural for some areas to have experience with integration in the past.

“A ‘king’ integrated this territory a few times, but there were always disputes with the residents. We weren’t the only people living there.”

Currently in Talia, two forces existed. The inhabitants of the forest and the residents from Jin Soo-young’s city. Even if they were ‘Tellans’, it was clear that they would have cultural differences. It would be strange if there were no disputes. Maybe they were still fighting now.

“My ancestors constantly brought the matter before the king to mediate the strife, but the king... He didn’t solve the problem at all. According to the rules of the gods...”

“We haven’t been here long.” Well, it wouldn’t be much different from explorers of other worlds. I couldn’t afford to act as king if it meant giving up time in the real world.

“In the end, the king constantly brought in new forces without resolving the conflicts, creating more... In the end, the kingdom was destroyed and the territories split apart again. There was no meaning and the fallout was just disorder and disputes...”

“I see. It’s okay. That is sufficient.” I waved my hands.

“Once again, we really have no treasure. So please spare my sister.”

“Well... Unlike you, your sister will need a lot of potions. To be honest, I really don’t want to use such a precious thing.”

Kino’s face distorted at my words. Of course, I had already made a decision from the beginning. I poured the last few drops of the potion into Kino’s sister’s mouth.

“T-Thank you!”

I looked around the room. It was clearly a place where the lord resided, but there was a scruffy feeling that was no different from the rest of the castle. The wall decorations and furniture were definitely old-fashioned and showed the signs of age. However, they must be well managed to maintain the original antiquity after such a long time.

“Do the people here listen to you?”

“Huh?”

“Despite having no treasures and your sister only being a few years older than you, the both of you have managed to make the people outside listen. That makes me wonder.”

He didn’t have a clear answer. I changed the question. “What do you or your sister do as the lord?”

Kino saw that his sister was being healed and answered with a more relaxed atmosphere than before. “I, I just help out my sister... We are responsible for conducting the planting of the moss and the funerals for the old... If a new baby is born then we officiate the ceremony. Everything in the castle, such as management and...”

“Indeed.” Kino’s sister started coughing. “Bring the water.”

Kino quickly obeyed. As he poured water into her mouth from the kettle, she started coughing out blood.

I poured the rest of the water on her face. A face that wasn’t that much older than Kino was revealed. If Kino looked like he was in the 2nd year of high school, then she would be around a 3rd year university student?

“...Ah.” Eyes with deep double eyelids stared at the ceiling. Then she became astonished as she saw me.

As her eyes flashed, I quickly stepped back. Then I gave Kino

instructions. “Calm her down. Do it until we can have a conversation.”

Kino ran into his sister’s arms. He touched his sister’s cheeks, that were neatly restored, and whispered a few words while sobbing.

“You are a saint.” In the meantime, Jin Soo-young was sitting down to alleviate her pain. Her voice was quite clear.

“Yes. Doesn’t the sight fill you with pride?”

“Not at all.” Jin Soo-young frowned. I looked down at her.

“I thought your mind wasn’t bad.”

“What?”

“Still. You should study more, like your father. Your mind will improve if you read a few history books.”

Leaving the speechless Jin Soo-young behind me, I walked forward again. Kino had told his sister that I had saved them. However, her eyes didn’t seem friendly as she gazed at me while hugging her brother.

“... Thank you for sparing the life of me and my brother, King.”

“It’s nothing.”

“But we... We won’t follow you.”

“Shouldn’t you listen before deciding?” Obviously, there was a place somewhere in this castle where integration was possible.

“Of course, it is possible but you should’ve seen it. Even if you bring the people of this land to your territory... Only chaos will occur. You won’t be able to keep it.”

“... Aha.” I was impressed. “Is that why you developed the rules of the religion?”

“...I just finished what Father planned.”

At first, it was just a rule to reject the offer of citizenship. However, wouldn’t a third party frown at the thought of a religion? In fact, Jin Soo-young had already described the residents of this place as fanatics.

“Great.” To an outsider, this was just a barren territory with fanatics. The idea of integration would be dropped instantly. Even if they killed the lord for the sake of treasure, the territory would just be ignored instead of integrated.

But rather, I needed to integrate this land. “You know the integration place, right? Please guide me.”

“...!” The woman’s eyes shook.

“What... Didn’t I tell you? This place...”

“Yes. I still want to do it.”

“If you are looking for treasures, of course there was a time when my family had relics. But after several integrations...”

“One remains.” I pointed my finger and declared. “You.” Kino’s sister.

“Aren’t you at the top of this religion? Despite the religion only have a short history, you only need to say a few words and the residents will follow you.”

“I will never...”

“I will give you the right to rule.”

I heard Jin Soo-young take a sharp breath from behind me. It was the same for the woman.

“What...?”

“It is like I said. I will give you the right to rule my territory and

all the people living in it.”

So far, I hadn't paid much attention to the governance of my city. When I thought about it, the city was definitely part of the dungeon. Even Isaiah would get more power the more the city was active. Instead of neglecting the inhabitants, was there a way to organize them into one community?

“I think your skills are sufficient.”

In history, the means that the ruling class used to justify their rights varied. They could monopolize information only they knew, promote social discipline or lead ceremonies. Of course, that alone didn't make them a ruler. Sometimes it was necessary to borrow the power of armed forces or wealth, but that wasn't the case in this castle. It was the planting of moss, management of goods and various ceremonies. It felt like they had squeezed everything possible from this land. The difference was more prominent compared to the forest. A culture and rules were maintained here under a unified leader, compared to the forest where the population was scattered.

“My city has a sun. There are no metals to be used as raw material yet, but there is a blacksmith for quality goods and breeding grounds for livestock. I will leave it to you.”

Their ancestors had been tired of the chaos. But, that was when their ancestors were one of the many neglected. They didn't have a position as the ruler.

“But by what authority...”

“Authority? Why worry about it? It is my authority.”

I could still wield ultimate power in the city. I could give and take citizenship away at will. I just couldn't pour my effects into the city due to time being the same as reality.

“I can give you as much authority as you like. I will support you... Well, a more reliable guarantee should be given when thinking about the people who would come in the future. I want you to be my empress.”

“...!!!”

I just threw a word that I thought of. It seemed they needed to discuss it.

I moved away and gave a signal to Kino. The boy had distanced himself from his sister without knowing it while listening to the conversation. I approached his sister's chair and bowed. After lowering myself to my knees so that we were eye level, I placed my hand on her thigh and asked.

“What is your name?”

“...Mino...”

“Yes. Mino. I need a companion. Someone who will rule my city when I’m not there. Don’t you also want your people to live in a better environment? These are people who followed you and your family faithfully. They deserve to see the sun.”

Eye contact was always effective. “And once again, I think you are well qualified.”

“...”

“Let’s go together.”

At that time, I heard yelling from outside the door. The news of intruders had spread and the people outside were coming up.

Tang!

There was the sound of the door opening and the desperate expressions of the residents calling their lord. “Lord!”

As the agitated residents tried to storm the room, “Stand down.” Mino raised her palm and stopped them.

“This person, he came to save us.”

Chapter 61 – Day 13, 10th Floor Big Picture

(5)

I was shocked.

“...”

It was for another reason. Over 2,000 people were prostrating themselves before me on the ground. They were also wailing.

“King!”

“Savior!!”

They said those words. King and saviour. It was my new packaging. The main entrance of the castle had a very gentle and wide slope. After gathering the residents there, Mino addressed them. It had only taken 30 minutes.

“The king has decided to take me as his wife.”

In those 30 minutes, I became a saviour that would restore the glory of the past, which was different from the ‘demons.’ It was the second time I felt admiration today, after the big guy’s use of the axe. I felt like my choice was right. I only memorized the vocabulary words and combined them to use in conversation. The pronunciation and nuances of my Tellan wasn’t that good.

Although I couldn't completely feel how brilliant her speech was due to the language barrier, I couldn't help being impressed with Mino. An incredible voice and pressure came out from a girl of around 20 years old.

"How great." I unknowingly exclaimed once her speech was over.

Mino looked at me with surprise before laughing. "Now they are Your Majesty's as well."

It was like she said. Even though the harsh words 'your lives belong to him' came out in the speech, the inhabitants seemed to respond to that even more.

"Then let's go."

"Yes."

I walked through the castle with her guidance. It was the opposite of the castle's top floor. There was a room in the basement where the treasures were originally stored. Now it was empty and an altar was the only thing there.

I stepped up to it.

[Neutral Zone – Castle: Lewin. Integrated.]

My view changed. Just like the other day, I was up in the sky. Every time an integration was taking place, it was possible to observe the newly added territories from the sky.

Talia. Forest. The factory. The newly added ‘Lewin Castle’ was attached to the south of Talia. Originally, it was the most remote place in my area, but not anymore. There was an area to the south of Lewin Castle.

[City: Vermouth]

[Neutral Zone – Campi Reservoir]

Lewin was located between two cities. I narrowed my eyes. There were people around the perimeter of Lewin. All the inhabitants had been instructed to enter Lewin Castle, so they must be from the cities.

They were the inhabitants of the forest and Jin Soo-young’s ‘Vermouth.’

I went down to Talia. The inhabitants of the forest saw me coming down from the sky and ran over.

“What’s going on?”

“King! They...”

After hearing Kino’s explanation, it wasn’t difficult to predict the situation. Jin Soo-young’s Vermouth was a city where the buildings and culture remained intact. The value of the relics were high, but the Tellans living there suffered from a lack of food and water. This didn’t change after Jin Soo-young occupied the city, but then it was integrated with Talia. Although it wasn’t tasty, there was no need to worry about starvation. We had the Kasava.

“They want to distribute the food but... The guards didn’t listen to us when we tried to stop them.”

All of the Tellans here were now my citizens. The golems wouldn’t kill any citizens.

“Stop.” I waved my hand towards the elder explaining the situation.

“K-King.”

“Don’t panic, I don’t plan to neglect you.”

I headed straight to Lewin Castle. I was greeted with cheers at Lewin Castle. They didn’t know about the fighting outside, but they could see a new world before them.

“Your Majesty.” Even Mino, who remained calm in front of the residents, was flushed with excitement.

“I have something for you to do.”

“...Yes!”

“There is a conflict outside. It’s between residents who know me already and those who don’t.” I briefly described the situation to Mino.

“Can you do it? If it is too difficult then I will...”

“No, it’s fine.” Mino looked at me with a determined expression.

“I will scold them harshly for making trouble for Your Majesty. Everything belongs to Your Majesty, and me as well.”

There was a slight anxiety in her last words. Maybe it was because she could actually see Talia now. It was a heavenly scene that she witnessed for the first time in her life. She couldn’t believe that she really was the owner of this place.

“Yes.”

She needed to be convinced again of ‘who she was’ in this place. I laid a hand on Mino’s shoulder.

“You are my queen.” After that, I walked behind Mino. Mino left to instruct the residents in a solemn voice.

“You. My. Queen.” Jin Soo-young, who was leaning against a wall, imitated my tone and ridiculed me.

“You have played the king. Are you a king now? Your Majesty?”

“How can that be? Princess-nim?”

The conversation seemed to be an exchange of compliments, but there was a degree of sarcasm if one listened closely.

“I’ll carry you.”

“...I don’t want to.”

“Don’t be stubborn. Really.” I put a hand under her legs and on her back.

“Euh...”

“I’ve met a lot of crazy girls lately, but you are probably at the top of the tower.”

Did Japan call this a princess embrace? No matter how busy, there was no way eyes wouldn’t gaze at me as I walked down the castle.

Jin Soo-young complained, “C-Change your posture. Just uphill...”

“Didn’t I tell you? Don’t be stubborn.”

“...”

“Remember this next time you are injured.”

I headed down from the castle towards Talia. After entering the city, the army of Lewin Castle was already moving in unison to successfully control the two forces with no blood loss.

“...Great.”

“What?”

“...It is great.” Jin Soo-young said in a reluctantly approving tone.

“Honestly don’t think about it. There is an insurmountable gap between you and I. What is this?”

“This crazy bastard!”

Jin Soo-young jerked away with a shout, then she flinched as it agitated her injury. Then I dropped her to the ground. I sat on a

bench while Jin Soo-young recovered her breathing. Her HP had almost reached the limit so I pulled out a medicine from my inventory.

“....

She looked at it with surprised eyes. “...Tha...nk you.” Jin Soo-young accepted it.

“It doesn’t really matter to me. You should watch your mouth a little bit. There are two things that you have to put up with. Being weaker than me and being a small dog that barks at the strong.”

“...Are you strong?”

“Then am I weak?”

I got up again, this time intending to go back to business. I helped Jin Soo-young up.

“In addition, this isn’t a little world... It is really bad for a woman to swear like this.”

“...A real jerk.”

Jin Soo-young didn’t show any resistance as I assisted her towards the central stairway. She opened her mouth once we were in front of the stairs.

“Now you should be vigilant. You don’t know when I will kill you.”

“Indeed, a girl with a dirty mouth will have a dirty mind.” I put Jin Soo-young down by the stairs.

There were many things to worry about on this floor. Maybe the biggest purpose was to show my abilities to Jin Soo-young. As I said, Jin Soo-young wasn’t an idiot. It wasn’t enough to imprint ‘you can’t kill me’ into her. I didn’t know what was going to happen, but if she noticed a gap, then she was going to try and kill me.

“I will become the emperor.” I told Jin Soo-young in a serious voice.

“...He. The ruler of this world?”

“Let’s see? I think my opinion has changed recently, but if I become the emperor of this world, it won’t be different from becoming the emperor in reality.

“...”

She couldn’t kill me, rather than don’t kill me.

I was far above Jin Soo-young. I wanted to instill the fact in her

mind that there wasn't much value in stabbing me in the back compared to following me.

“Go down the stairs first.”

“...You?”

“I have a lot of work to do here today.” I also wanted to check the result of the experiment.

“When you see Director Oh, tell him that we met some Chinese explorers.” I was going to roll Jin Soo-young down the stairs.

“W-Wait a minute.”

“What?”

“I have one thing to ask.”

I raised an eyebrow. Jin Soo-young spoke with a serious expression. “Will you sleep? With that woman?”

“...”

“What? I...” I pushed Jin Soo-young down the stairs.

The contents of my experiment weren't much.

The Chinese swordsman. I didn't kill him. Once his body was in a critical state, the roots of his desires were extracted.

-He wants to kill. Those taller than himself. Also a big body. All the good-looking people...

It was a review of the 'tasty part' that the sacred creature ate. Complex. I had expected a little bit, but it was very precise. Perhaps he changed his physical inferiority complex into combat power? Of course, there was a risk, but obtaining a unique talent would have a food effect.

However, I had no intention of taking it. Unique talents weren't the only sweet parts. The root of his desire was a desire based on an inferiority complex related to the body. If he obtained a better body, then the sense of inferiority would lessen... Wasn't it similar to a mental state?

That's why he fed the sacred creature. He instructed the sacred creature to eat the desire itself.

"Hey. Still nothing?"

I asked the sacred creature but there wasn't a reply. The sacred creature almost screamed as it devoured the Chinese man's desire. Shortly after that, the sacred creature fell asleep straight away.

Well, I just guessed that he was asleep. It was probably due to a sudden sense of satiety.

Anyway, I did an experiment with the Chinese man in that state. I placed a ticket in his hand and tore it.

My ‘servant’, Jin Soo-young came to me after I occupied the area. But generally, others would be forced out as soon as I took over an area.

But what about this? What if a ticket to the 5th floor was used? It was an item that would automatically return a person to the place it was torn after 12 hours.

The Chinese man was already half dead. Once he returned to reality, he wouldn’t have a significant influence due to his desires being eaten. However, he might be able to stay in the occupied area using this method. It was a loophole that I could use.

The remaining time was about 10 hours. I wouldn’t be able to do anything until that time was over.

I turned around and looked at something, then threw my tired body on the bed.

I was currently in the upper level accommodation. It was a pretty luxurious room. I didn’t know what the material was, but the sheets and cushions covering the bed were smooth without feeling old.

There was a mild scent. I closed my eyes.

“Your Majesty.”

“...”

I opened my eyes, sat up and saw Mino. She reported with both hands clasped in front of her.

“Everybody has obeyed Your Majesty’s authority without any problems. No one was hurt or killed except for two people who clashed before the first suppression occurred.”

“...Well done.”

I rubbed the sleep from my face and removed my feet from the ground, placing them back on the bed.

“I’ll be sleeping now. Then...”

There was no meaning. There was still a lot of time left, and I didn’t need to intervene in anything.

“Now... Is that what you are saying?”

“Yes. Now.”

Recently, I didn't have a lot of time to lie down like this. I'm going to take a nap, so take care of everything.

"Please." I lay down and closed my eyes. As I felt a weight on the other side of the bed, I realized two things.

My skills in Tellan were still poor. I used simple words and often didn't understand the meaning of idioms. For example, 'sleep.' I opened my eyes.

"..."

"..."

The second thing was that I just thought of this as a good place to stay. As king of the castle, it was natural to take the best room in the castle. The best room in the castle. Then whose room was it? You stupid bastard.

"So... If you look..."

I hadn't thought of it. But I needed to say something now. She was trembling in front of me right now. Ah, she had mistaken my words and had taken off her clothes right away. She didn't need to do that.

I had to admit my mistake and take responsibility. As the coffee

coloured skin neared my nose, the identity of the scent coming from the bed became clear. Suddenly, I remembered what Jin Soo-young said before she descended.

“Pff.”

Mino’s nervous face became grouchy because she thought I was laughing at her. “Why... Do you...?”

“No. I’m sorry.”

I solemnly apologized. I tried my best to keep my manners.

Chapter 62 – Day 13, 10th Floor Price-Performance Ratio

The moss from Lewin Castle was able to be dried and drank as a tea. According to Mino, the drink used to be exchanged with other regions. Now that the other areas were gone, they ate it to gain as much nutrients as possible.

Anyhow, it wasn't bad when I drank it. It was like a herbal tea with a slight sweetness. I didn't like hot drinks like coffee, but it was a taste that I would buy at a cafe.

“....”

I drank it and the sweat on my body dried.

I suddenly felt like it was a waste.

“Your Majesty.”

I turned my head and saw Mino. This was her office. She was standing next to the desk while holding a kettle.

“Would you like some more?”

“...Yes.”

Unlike me, Mino had already washed. However, her skin was still damp and I could smell the scent of her body. As I became aware of the smell, I felt something rising inside me again. I hurriedly drank the cup again.

“Ahh, it is too hot...”

Yes. So please drink up.”

I looked at her mouth and neck before suppressing the boiling feeling inside me.

What was this? It felt like something was crying out in my heart.

A little bit more. A little bit more.

It seemed like the body and mind had become one.

It was a natural physiological reason. I could have just explained it as a lot of stress accumulating in the meantime. I was a man and it wasn't strange for a man to like a woman. But I had Jin Soo-young a few hours ago. It was a few times. Now I couldn't stop thinking about correcting the mistake that I made before in rejecting Mino. Therefore, I ended up drinking as much tea as possible.

“....”

“....”

Mino looked down with a red face like she knew what I was thinking. Fortunately, it seemed like she wasn't offended. Anyway, I would investigate this strange feeling after I finished my task. The thing that I was working on...

Pak.

“...!”

Mino retreated with a look of surprise.

[There is an invasion from outsides.]

[You can expel them using the command – Expel.]

The Chinese man had returned on one side of the office. It was the same place that I tore his ticket 12 hours ago.

“Can you go outside? It is dangerous.”

Mino immediately followed my instructions. The Chinese man had recovered to some extent. His HP was 2/3 restored and he was holding a ticket in his hand, as if in preparation to flee. I appeared in front of him and kicked out.

“Ack!”

The ticket fell to the ground. I grabbed the groaning man and placed him on a chair.

“#%……. @#%!@…….”

The Chinese man spat out curses. Even though the sacred creature had eaten his unique talent, he was almost completely recovered as he glared at me.

“It is fun to have a conversation in a language we both know.”

I spoke in English.

“My... My unique talent, how...”

“I ate it.”

I made the gestures of eating something.

“Yum yum yum.”

“Bullshit.”

He said with an expression that asked me not to joke around.

“That isn’t possible.”

“Isn’t it reality? You can check with your own eyes.”

If he wanted to get it back then he needed to answer my questions. Then I would be able to extract the information I wanted.

“You... I know you killed Yan. Then you don’t have my talent.”

“....”

“Your eyes... Why...?”

I felt something strange. I changed my words.

“I don’t know what you are talking about. I have both your talent and Yan’s. I also have two more unique talents.”

In fact, one of them had become the dog’s food.

“That is crazy!”

It was the same reaction. He really didn’t believe it. I had to pay attention to the nuances in his words. It wasn’t the fact that his

talent was taken away, but denial that ‘I’ had it.

“Why, are you so envious that you can’t stand? Do you feel envy that I have four unique talents?”

There was something obvious.

China might be different from South Korea. If they made a system that collected explorers quickly like Director Oh guessed, they might have a lot more information than me. And there was a discrepancy between that information and what I knew.

“People... Fool... I know.”

Let’s do a little bit more. Just as I was opening my mouth,

Duguen.

My heart started to beat very quickly.

“...!!”

What?

I took one step back and touched my chest. It wasn’t just my heart running wild.

More violence. Don't let anyone command you. Become stronger.
Train harder.

My own voice was ringing in my head. I was burning with familiar feelings. But there were also some feelings that weren't boiling over.

Impatience. The emotion that emerged when I was started something and waiting for it to pay off. Regret that the future would be over if things didn't improve right away. What had I done so far? I had to do something right now.

Right now.

Right now.

Right now.

“Ek...”

The desires for things that couldn't be done right away constantly rose inside me. It felt like someone who could control my emotions had artificially manipulated me. Now I got it. These impulses were the reason why I kept on thinking about sleeping with those two women over and over. Now it was a dozen times worse than before.

Tak.

I staggered back. The countless impulses were creating errors in my body's computer, meaning it couldn't follow any simple orders.

"That... It was true."

I looked forward.

The Chinese man was looking at me with a disbelieving expression. A new ticket was in his hand. But he didn't tear it.

"I don't know why you said those things just now."

"...."

The Chinese man said, "Heart demons. It is a natural symptom. Yan's talent and my talent. It is too much for you to take possession of those treasures."

He brought out a new sword from his inventory.

"Heart demons...?"

"Did you really not know? Hah. So your conversation about the four talents was just nonsense."

Retreat. I desperately tried to command my body.

He thought I was already caught so the Chinese man walked forward slowly at a leisurely pace. The sword handle turned in his hands.

“If there were four, no three, you wouldn’t even be able to stand like that. Unique talent? It is a special desire that only a small number of those who come in here can have. A human can never keep several of them in a bowl. Let alone... It is hard to suppress just one unique talent.”

Let’s say that his words were true. Why did it only show up now...

“Let alone four...”

Ah. Sacred creature. By the time I realized Underdog, my second talent, the sacred creature had started living in me. Did he take the role of eating my desires?

Now he was sleeping and couldn’t answer. When I thought about it, touching Jin Soo-young... It wasn’t a unique talent but I fed on Jin Soo-young’s desires. Shortly after that, I joined my body with Jin Soo-young. It was my intention to sleep with her, but my thoughts were more severe.

Now that the sacred creature wasn’t eating it, the desires overwhelming me were boiling over.

“Either way, this is a good opportunity.”

The Chinese man stood in front of me.

“I had always wondered. Whether I am a vessel who can endure two unique talents. Each person will have a different tolerance.”

“...Kuk.”

I was curious about his words. There was no doubt that I was such a vessel. I faced him.

“Yen can feel relieved.”

He swung the sword. I bit my lip.

Jaaeng!

“Uh?!”

The Chinese man took a few steps back. My fist had hit his sword. I bit my lip harder. Dammit. Get moving.

“...You still have the ability to move that much with two desires.”

I had three, motherfucker.

I raised my fist in a fighting pose.

It was painful but... I forced out every last bit of strength. I was able to move my body somehow as I got used to the pain. It was necessary to concentrate on just the simplest movements but it was getting better.

“Yen will be vexed!”

He rushed forward again.

Jaaeng! Jaaeng! Jaaeng!

It was clear. I saw where the attacks were coming from. The move to stop it. If my body was fine then I could easily knock him out. But despite such obvious attacks, I couldn't overwhelm him. Was this the feeling of playing on a lagging computer? My body reacted slower than my instructions.

But that was fine. I wouldn't act hastily.

“Hiyah! Hiiyah Ick!”

Sounds emerged from the Chinese's mans mouth. There was a difference in strength so I wasn't the only one feeling impatient. He was impatient to break my defense. As time passed, his breath was becoming heavy with exhaustion.

Me? Unfortunately, I was just frustrated at my movements. The stamina expenditure was zero.

“...Wah... Look...”

I set up my defenses. He never tore his ticket. His ego didn't allow him to miss making up for his loss. The game was over once he became tired and moved slower than me.

Snap.

But there was a variable.

“Your Majesty!”

The door opened and Mino entered. She might have heard the sound of the sword or noticed something unusual. Mino was looking at me with a deep expression of worry. I managed to control my expression but it was apparent to the Chinese man.

Tak!

The Chinese man jumped towards Mino.

I followed him as well. But these damn legs!

Get moving. Kill that guy. Kill him!

My heart cried out. It wasn't a direct instruction to anyone.

-Yes.

There was an answer. Something popped out of my chest and cross my vision in an instant. In fact, there was one more thing. I couldn't connect it. The sacred creature I knew was just a small dog.

Kwajik.

Even though he was short, he was firmly biting the neck of an adult man.

“Ack!”

He swung his head and shook the Chinese man like a doll.

Peeok!

The creature on the ground was far from the appearance of a fearsome beast.

“Ah... Ahh...”

Mino sat down with fright. The origin of her fear didn't care about Mino. He just looked at the Chinese man who almost stopped breathing and headed towards me with a wagging tail.

-Master!

The dog had a body length of three metres and painted as it saw me.

[‘Sacred Creature: []’ materialization complete.]

[The species is unable to be identified.]

[The name is unable to be identified.]

-Me, give me a name.

I didn't know if the Chinese man's unique talent would ultimately affect me. But one thing was for sure.

The price-performance ratio of the dog was very good.

